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A Semantic Approach to the Teaching of Foreign Languages

THE ASTP program of teaching languages during the recent war produced a fleeting vision of a language teacher's millennium. It has been largely dissipated by the realization that the conditions under which the Army worked cannot be duplicated in the average classroom of either the colleges or the public school systems. The Army had a highly selected group of mature students (many with some college training already) who were carefully disciplined and highly motivated to succeed by the threat of being transferred to replacement battalions if they failed. The number of contact hours was extremely high, the supplies of mechanical equipment were especially adequate and, in most colleges, the informants and often the teachers were native speakers of the language. The teachers, in addition were almost always persons with ample classroom experience. These are conditions which are actually unattainable in the ordinary two-year course in foreign languages in either high school or college.

The great majority of foreign language teachers in the United States are not native speakers, too small a number of them fluently speak the language they teach and in most universities the elementary courses are taught by graduate assistants and instructors with limited experience. Most of the elementary students are immature youngsters who are usually taking a foreign language as a forced requirement (which they resent) and, consequently, with practically no motivation to learn it. And, lastly, until a radical change in our public attitudes toward education comes about, it is impossible to expect that money will be made available to support small classes and to acquire costly equipment and phonetic laboratories.

If the language teachers face these facts realistically, it becomes rather evident that there is little likelihood of a fundamental change in our teaching situation within the near future. The majority of language students will continue to be taught from relatively standardized textbooks, the processes of teaching and learning (in contrast with living in a foreign country) will be artificial and the responsibility for learning the language thoroughly will fall in large part upon the individual student, who will have to continue studying and learning on his own outside of the classroom.

If we are to have improvements in teaching and learning, we need, as a consequence, to search for them within the general framework in which we are forced to function rather than in the dream-world of an idealistic and unattainable situation.

As long as the student has a textbook, prepares lessons at home, learns vocabulary, verb forms, idioms and syntactical constructions by himself (instead of unconsciously imitating them as a child in a foreign land), the learning of a foreign language is going to be a highly intellectual, rational and artificial process. The student in the classroom does not have embarrassing accidents because he cannot ask a passerby where there is a public toilet, nor is he tucked into jail because he cannot explain that he left the title of his car at home. He simply gets "F" for that day's recitation and consoles himself with the realization that the situation was purely artificial. Beyond the ubiquitous problem of providing artificial motivation for a better repeat performance the teacher can best find improvements by frankly admitting the facts of the situation and by close analysis of the basic teaching and learning processes inherent in it.

It is now a psychological truism that we learn by going from the known to the unknown and that the process of learning is facilitated by carefully avoiding any psychological disturbances of this natural pattern. These elementary principles of pedagogy are, unfortunately, disregarded in many instances by both the teacher and the textbook maker.

It is standard practice to place foreign language words first in textbook vocabularies although the meaning cannot possibly be ascertained until the eye travels to the English words following them and in spite of the fact that this arrangement fosters a passive recognition knowledge in the average student. We labor, much too often, under the misapprehension that by some linguistic magic we are going to teach Americans to think like Spaniards or Chinamen, while we admit that it is virtually impossible to make a convinced Catholic think like a Lutheran or a blue-blooded Bostonian like an Iowa dirt farmer. They may both use the same words and syntax, but the thoughts and emotions these complexes express are not the same. A *casa elegante* to a traditional Mexican symbolizes an architectural and conceptual unit fundamentally different from what a traditional New Englander labels with the words "an elegant house." *Cabrón* is simply a "he-goat" to most Americans, and they will not, like many Latins, blush at hearing the word in mixed society or fly into a rage if it is applied to them. Thinking like a foreigner is not merely being able to manipulate the elements of his language according to his conventions; it is something much more complex. It is, in short, becoming a foreigner, assuming his cultural traditions, his conditionings and reacting according to his taboos and inhibitions.

It is a pedagogical pretense to assume that the elementary student of language is being taught to "think" in a foreign language. We do, however, attempt to teach him how to equate certain linguistic complexes of the two languages so that he can communicate, with a reasonable approximation, what he thinks in his own language; we attempt to drill him enough on these equations so that eventually he may express himself with the second set of

symbols without a conscious effort of translation. This is, without any doubt as close to "thinking" in a foreign language as the overwhelming majority of school-taught linguists ever get, and, if we are willing to be frank, this is much more than is accomplished by the huge majority of college-trained students at the end of three or four years of study of a foreign language.

The elementary student thinks in English. The process of learning a foreign language is the process of learning enough symbols and linguistic conventions to be able to express those thoughts in the second linguistic medium. Every normal student, moreover, will inevitably be capable of expressing more thoughts in his own language than he will in the second as long as the second language is not his everyday medium of expression. Consequently, throughout his "learning" career he is constantly progressing from what he already knows toward what he still has to learn; he is constantly going from the known to the unknown.

If these principles are accepted as valid, a number of pedagogical improvements become immediately self-evident. In order to go from the known to the unknown with the least amount of confusion and psychological disturbance the student should meet the English word first in his vocabulary. This simple change in textbook format would be extremely helpful, although it is not enough to achieve anything but a superficial change in our present system. A more fundamental change is necessary if we are to apply what we already know about the psychology of learning.

As most of our textbooks now present their vocabularies, the student is forced, amazingly enough, to go from the unknown to the unknown when he first meets a new word. He learns a linguistic equation, x equals y , without knowing the value of either x or y . He learns, for example, in one of our most recent Spanish grammars that *vez* means "time," that *tiempo* means "time" and that *hora* also means "time." If he goes no farther than his vocabulary, this information is absolutely useless to him since he has an unknown factor on both sides of his equation. Which concept of *time* in English is each one of the Spanish words symbolizing? The student is naturally confused, and if at all sensitive psychologically he is likely to be frustrated; a block to easy and rapid learning is erected before him. His next step, if he has the initiative and energy to go on, is to hunt around in the lesson until he finds a Spanish sentence exemplifying the function of each one of these words. He finally obtains by this disturbing and uneconomical process an equation of concepts in which each element is clearly defined:

I saw him many *times*.

Time is the fourth dimension.

Is it *time* to eat?

Le ví muchas *veces*.

El *tiempo* es la cuarta dimensión

¿Es *hora* de comer?

The elementary student, if he is somewhat of a linguistic genius, finally ends up where he should have been started, with a clear equation of concepts, not just a meaningless equation of words. However, if he ever happens to

want to review his vocabulary, he must repeat the whole laborious process in order to be certain that he is reinforcing the proper linguistic equations. This, it is obvious, is too much to be expected from most students, and it should be no wonder to us, under such conditions, that many students compose nonsensical sentences like these: "El fué un largo tiempo en llegando" (He was a long time in arriving) or "Es su cama vez" (It's his bedtime). Our present system prepares the student to think in just exactly this fashion!

The student's troubles in learning a foreign language can be very considerably reduced by teaching him to equate concepts, instead of words, from the very beginning and by making him quite conscious of the fact that he is doing this. In practice this means that vocabularies in textbooks must be either accompanied by adequate definitions or the words should be presented in a context which clearly defines their meaning. Every teacher of language has to supply such material in class under our present system. It would certainly be more efficient to put it in the textbooks where the student can get the information whenever he happens to need it.

This method, of course, raises the question of how these concepts should be selected and what they should be. If we follow our fundamental thesis, we should begin by teaching the elementary student how to express those concepts which most commonly occur to him in English. If we do not do this, we prolong the length of time during which he is incapable of saying what most often passes through his mind, and we proportionately increase in him the sensation that he will never actually learn how to use the second language effectively. It is highly desirable to provide in each day's study enough reward to justify the effort expended and enough stimulation to urge the student on to the next lesson. The student's satisfaction comes largely from the feeling of success in saying and comprehending what is significant to him in his own circumstances and culture. The most efficient way to approach the early stages of foreign language teaching would seem, consequently, to be realized by providing the student with adequate foreign equivalents for his commonest English concepts.

The individual teacher, the writer of grammar texts, especially, while depending upon his subjective judgement, can do much to mend a weakness in our present system of teaching. Ideally, a semantic English-foreign language word list should be accessible for each of the languages taught in our schools. Such a list would not need to be ponderous in size in order to supply a basic active vocabulary.

It is generally recognized that a relatively few words are sufficient to express our average needs. In the Faucett-Maki list¹ 340 words are con-

¹ Faucett, Lawrence and Maki, Itsu, *A Study of English Word-Values Statistically Determined from the Latest Extensive Word-Counts*. Tokyo, 1932. This is a composite of Thorndike's *The Teacher's Word Book* and Horn's *A Basic Writing Vocabulary*.

sidered indispensable and 1534 as essential (some of these being different forms of the same word). The compilers of this list estimate that these 1500 essential words will cover 75 per cent of word occurrences in almost any kind of normal English.² In a count of spoken English, Charles Voelker finds that 50 words make up half of the running total in the speeches used as a basis for his count.³ This estimate corresponds closely with a test check made on ten sonnets from Shakespeare and ten from William Ellery Leonard's *Two Lives*, in which it was found that 50 words comprise approximately half of the total word count. Clearly, any minimum vocabulary will include the "simplest" and most innocent-looking words, the very ones to cause the most trouble (consider the prepositions) because of the wide variation of notions with which they are associated. These words must be taught, but they should be taught in such a way as to bring out their multiple connotations since their usefulness consists precisely in their extensive range of meanings.

It seems logical, then, to seek a plan that will get the most out of a select group of words by stressing concepts rather than forms. As a start toward the realization of this goal, the Lorge-Thorndike semantic count⁴ is the most useful source now available. The Eaton semantic list⁵ is less helpful for the purposes discussed here. It shows the relative importance in four languages (English, French, German, Spanish) of about 6000 basic concepts, and from it we are able to see a few meanings of individual words on which the four languages concur in high frequency. It is reasonable to assume that, if a word has a high rating of use in four different languages, this word—that is, basic concept—may be considered indispensable to a student of any of these languages. The Eaton list provides us with a comparative frequency rating of a few basic definitions, but its value for semantic purposes is very limited because it does not break the words down sufficiently into their various meanings. It remains, in spite of its title, essentially a comparative word list rather than a semantic list. The following example will illustrate the limitations of the Eaton list for semantic use: the verb "catch" appears alone with no definition and is accompanied by the foreign words *attraper*, *fangen*, *coger*. It appears also in the following phrases: "catch sight of (perceive)":

² Cf. also Keniston, Hayward, *A Standard List of Spanish Words and Idioms*, D. C. Heath and Company, 1941, p. iii.

³ Voelker, Charles H., "The One-Thousand Frequent Spoken Words," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XXVIII (1942), pp. 189-97.

⁴ Lorge, Irving and Thorndike, E. L., *A Semantic Count of English Words*. Published in hectograph form by the Institute of Educational Research, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1938. This word count, using the *Oxford Dictionary of the English Language* as a guide, provides a range and frequency rating of the various words in Thorndike's *The Teacher's Word Book*. The words from A to O in the first 500 of Thorndike are in the process of being completed.

⁵ Eaton, Helen S., *Semantic Frequency List*. Chicago, 1940.

apercevoir; *bemerken*, *absehen*, *erblicken*, *wahrnehmen*, *ersehen*; *percibir*, *columbrar*, *vislumbrar*; "catch up (overtake)": *rejoindre*, *nachkommen*, *alcanzar*; "catch on fire": *prendre feu*; *sich entzünden*, *zünden*; *inflamar(se)*, *incendiar(se)*.

The comparative picture thus presented has its value, but for semantic purposes its weakness is that of any ordinary English-foreign-language dictionary. There is no way of determining, for example, in what context *attraper*, *fangen*, *coger* are the proper equivalents of "to catch." The Lorge-Thorndike count, on the other hand, supplies a rating for the definitions of English words which can be equated with any given foreign language. The following discussion will show how this semantic count can be useful for foreign language teachers.

Of the 53 definitions listed for "to catch" by the *Oxford Dictionary of the English Language*, the commonest meanings in order of relative frequency are according to the Lorge-Thorndike count: (1) to capture, (2) to grasp, (3) to surprise a person, (4) to succeed in hearing, seeing and so on, (5) to get a sudden view, (6) to intercept an object, (7) to attract the attention, (8) to deceive.⁶ These meanings require at least eight Spanish verbs to give a minimum range of Spanish equivalents:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) They <i>caught</i> the thief. | <i>Prendieron</i> al ladrón. |
| He <i>caught</i> the dog. | <i>Cogió</i> al perro. |
| (2) I <i>caught</i> him by the arm. | Le <i>cogí</i> por el brazo. |
| (3) We <i>caught</i> him trying to take the money. | Le <i>sorprendimos</i> cuando trataba de coger el dinero. |
| (4) I didn't <i>catch</i> what he said. | No <i>entendí</i> lo que dijo. |
| We <i>caught</i> what was going on. | <i>Caimos en cuenta</i> de lo que pasaba. |
| (5) I <i>caught sight</i> of him. | Le <i>alcancé a ver</i> . |
| (6) He <i>catches</i> the ball. | <i>Coge</i> la pelota. |
| (7) Moving things <i>catch one's eye</i> . | Cosas que se mueven <i>llaman la atención</i> . |
| (8) You <i>caught</i> me that time. | Me <i>pilló</i> esa vez. |

The usual dictionary and the usual word list do not provide the student with enough information to be able to discover in what context the various foreign equivalents may be used. The responsibility for supplying this missing information can and should be assumed by the writers of texts.

Although a few grammars have taken a step in the right direction by calling attention to the different meanings of English words, the problem has not been thoroughly or systematically approached.⁷ A check of ten currently-used elementary Spanish grammars chosen at random revealed that for the word "take" only the word *tomar* is common to all ten. *Sacar* is

⁶ The definitions given here are condensations rather than exact quotations from the *Oxford Dictionary*.

⁷ One good example of a semantic handling of vocabulary in a textbook is J. Hart Brown's *Handbook of Every-day French*. Macmillan, New York, 1939.

common to eight, *llevar* to seven, *quitar* to three. The two verbs *tomar* and *llevarse* are together common to seven of the grammars; *sacar* and *quitar* to three. Actually, no one meaning given for *tomar* is common to all the grammars in question. The usual practice is to introduce the word in one of the lessons, using it in one of its various connotations for the needs of the exercises at hand and leaving the student thereafter to his imagination as regards the further possibilities of the word. Since the other verbs for "to take" are more specific in their connotations than is the case with *tomar*, there is more consistency in the meanings given for them. But it is quite clear that our method of handling vocabulary in grammars is rather haphazard at present. This is true of review grammars as well as elementary texts. An examination of ten review grammars revealed virtually the same situation as that found in the first-year texts, except that in the former the variety of meanings and their necessary Spanish equivalents becomes somewhat broader. Again *tomar* is the only word common to all ten. *Llevar* is common to nine, *quitar* to eight, *sacar* to seven, *llevarse* to four. *Tomar* and *llevar* are together common to nine, *sacar* and *quitar* to six, *despedirse* and *hacer un viaje* to five.

"To take" is one of the most indispensable—and most troublesome—words to teach. The Oxford Dictionary lists 91 definitions of the word. Some of these include numerous subdivisions, and many single definitions require more than one Spanish equivalent since they involve a variety of connotations. Many of the definitions may be disregarded as being of infrequent use, and it will also be found that the same Spanish word will serve several different meanings. Nevertheless, the number of Spanish words necessary for the various shades of meanings is large. The six definitions of highest frequency according to the Lorge-Thorndike semantic count are in order of relative value: (1) to occupy a place or position; (2) to use as a means toward an end; (3) to remove, carry away, deprive; (4) to convey, carry, conduct; (5) to pick up, lay hold of; (6) to consume, use up, require. These definitions may be illustrated by the following sentences:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) <i>Take</i> this chair. | <i>Tome</i> asiento en esta silla. |
| <i>Take</i> your places. | <i>Ocupen</i> su lugar. |
| (collective) | |
| <i>Take</i> your place at the end of the line. | <i>Tome</i> puesto al final de la fila. |
| (2) I shall <i>take</i> the first opportunity to do it. | <i>Aprovecharé</i> la primera oportunidad para hacerlo. |
| What steps <i>have you taken</i> to prevent it? | ¿Qué medidas <i>ha tomado</i> para prevenirlo? |
| (3) They <i>took</i> his name off the list. | <i>Quitaron</i> su nombre de la lista. |
| He <i>took</i> off his hat. | Se <i>quitó</i> el sombrero. |
| He <i>took</i> it away from me. | Me lo <i>quitó</i> . |
| He <i>took</i> it away (with him). | Se lo <i>llevó</i> . |
| He <i>took</i> the money from (out of) his purse. | <i>Sacó</i> el dinero de su bolsa. |

He <i>took</i> his eyes off the book.	<i>Apartó</i> la vista del libro.
(4) I <i>took</i> him home.	Lo <i>llevé</i> a casa.
This road will <i>take</i> you to Puebla.	Este camino lo <i>llevará</i> a Puebla.
(5) He <i>took</i> his pen and began to write.	<i>Cogió</i> la pluma y empezó a escribir.
Take this money and buy a suit.	<i>Tome</i> este dinero y compre un traje.
(6) They <i>took</i> a long time in getting here.	<i>Tardaron</i> mucho en llegar aquí.
It will <i>take</i> a hundred dollars to fix the car.	<i>Costará</i> cien dólares componer el auto.
It <i>takes</i> a strong man to move this table.	Se <i>necesita</i> un hombre fuerte para mover esta mesa.
This table <i>takes</i> up the whole room.	Esta mesa <i>ocupa</i> todo el cuarto.

The meanings illustrated above, at least those requiring *tomar*, *llevar*, *llevarse*, *quitar(se)*, *coger*, *necesitarse*, probably should be included in all first- and certainly in all second-year grammars. For the second- and third-year texts, still other meanings involving *tener cuidado*, *hacer caso de*, *dar un paso* (*un paseo*, *una vuelta*), *hacer un viaje*, *echar un vistazo*, *entender*, *aceptar*, *tener por* and others should be added. If this approach to the teaching of vocabulary seemingly poses an unusual burden for the student, it should be remembered that we are dealing with indispensable meanings and expressions which we now expect the student to learn somehow on his own initiative. The vocabulary of concrete objects and animate beings, since it presents a much simpler problem, can be reduced to a minimum necessary only to give life and interest to the compositions. The emphasis should be placed upon the concepts most likely to occur in average speech. The over-worked verbs of the English language when wisely presented would give a student a broad groundwork in speaking ability.

If we accept the principle that various meanings of English words should be taught with care and diligence, our problem is to select the most frequently occurring concepts of the English language and to equate them with the foreign language. This is a task which cannot be accomplished with complete satisfaction since we have no count of English which shows the relative frequency of meanings on a general basis. The Lorge-Thorndike count gives relative frequency for definitions of individual words but not a relative frequency in an over-all perspective. We find from this count, for example, that the definition of highest frequency rating under the word "able" is "having the qualifications for" (89 per cent of total occurrences), but we do not know how this meaning compares in frequency with "to permit," which is the meaning of highest rating (48 per cent) under "allow," another word belonging to the same level of common usage (Thorndike, Ib). Our only recourse at present, then, is to begin with the commonest English words as listed by some dependable count⁸ and to select from the

⁸ At the present writing the most useful word list would seem to be the Faucett-Maki list correlated with Voelker's oral list, in order to favor as much as possible the spoken language.

Lorge-Thorndike Count the commonest meanings of these words. A total of about 70 per cent of the frequencies in Lorge-Thorndike is sufficient to include all but "rare-sounding" meanings. In some cases this total or a higher one is reached with only one or two definitions. In others, the number of definitions is formidable. Obviously the most useful words in the language will present the greatest number of meanings and variety of uses and will require the most attention in teaching.

Because of the large number of meanings required for individual words, the problem becomes twofold, embracing not only selection but systematic presentation as well. It would seem reasonable to present vocabulary—words and concepts—in progressive stages, advancing from the more essential to the less essential. There will be little difficulty in agreeing on the first few hundred most common words to be taught. Faucett-Maki lists 340 words as indispensable. These English words or a comparable group, together with the top 30 per cent of their meanings as determined from the Lorge-Thorndike count, might well form the core of a first-year grammar. After intensive practice on this material, the vocabulary can be stepped up much faster in a second-year text because the number of concepts to be learned will diminish proportionally as the vocabulary increases.

The objective thus centers upon the acquisition of a modest facility in the early stages of language study within a small vocabulary range. This, of course, means much more than learning a few hundred words. It involves placing the words in context in order to fix their various meanings and consequently demonstrates the relationship of the words to the structure of the context. This leads automatically to the teaching of inflections, idioms and syntax. For example, a student may learn that one of the meanings of "charge" is "care or custody," but he must know both the idiom and the use of the reflexive before he can transfer "to take charge of" into Spanish: *El se encargó del negocio*. It is obvious that, if the models used to illustrate meanings are correct, the student will not learn an unnatural manner of expressing himself in a foreign language.

The particular goal in teaching, of course, must be kept in mind. A list of commonest foreign concepts would be most useful for those who wish to acquire only a passive knowledge of a second language. It is less useful for the goal of self-expression than a similar English list because the beginner is most susceptible to a system of communication that is identified with his habitual thought processes. Until he has had an opportunity through long association with natives of foreign-language countries to express himself habitually in their language, he will need to have at his command model phrases to express concepts which will spontaneously and inevitably flash through his mind.

In this connection, the question arises as to the agreement between the foreign word lists and the foreign words used for an English list such as the

one proposed. In general the most common foreign words will be required for the most common English meanings. If, for example, a word in the first 500 of an English list requires a Spanish word in the third 500 of the Spanish list, the discrepancy is of little consequence, since words of such high frequency as the latter must pretty certainly be learned before we can hope to use the language satisfactorily. In some cases, however, Spanish words of comparatively low frequency are needed to express very common English expressions. "Busy," which is in the first 500 of the Faucett-Maki list, is equated in two of its basic meanings with *ocupado* and *activo*, in the first and second 500's respectively of the Keniston list. But if we wish to give the Spanish for the statements "He is a busy man" and "This is a busy corner," in which the two meanings of "busy" exemplify the first and second highest ratings in the Lorge-Thorndike count, we must use *atareado* and *transitado* (*Es un hombre atareado, Esta es una esquina transitada*), neither of which appears in the Keniston list of 3060 words (including 1060 derivatives).⁹ As a general rule, however, the English meanings to be translated will probably require words in the higher levels of frequency in the Spanish word lists.

Another way in which the foreign word lists can be used as guides is in the choice of words where more than one translates the same meaning. Thus, although "account" (a narrative report) may be rendered *relación* or *relato* in Spanish, *relación* is to be preferred in teaching beginners since it is in the first 1000 words of the Keniston list whereas *relato* does not appear in the list at all.¹⁰

By restricting ourselves in this manner—in teaching active vocabulary in grammars—to one word where two or more are possible for the same concept, we can simplify to some extent the student's task. Requiring a beginner to learn a variety of ways of saying the same thing, if it does not confuse him, increases unnecessarily his learning load. The beginning student is confronted with a tremendous amount of material to be learned in his grammar. He can not learn all this material in the usual amount of time allotted for the purpose. The beginning grammar, and even the second-year grammar, should be reduced to a minimum but reduced in accordance with a systematic plan that gives precedence and repetitive emphasis to what is absolutely essential. This applies to inflections, syntax and vocabulary alike, and it applies to those peculiar or idiomatic expressions which occupy a half-way ground between vocabulary and syntax. Such a reduc-

⁹ Of the twenty grammars mentioned above, none gives other than *ocupado* for "busy." The word "busy" does not appear at all in three of the elementary and three of the review grammars.

¹⁰ Keniston's *A Standard List of Spanish Words and Idioms*, because of the nature of the sources used in its composition, is more satisfactory than the Buchanan list for our purposes since it more nearly approaches the vocabulary of currently spoken Spanish.

tion of material must be looked upon as a practical necessity. Our task in teaching two years of a foreign language is to get the most possible out of a limited amount of basic material. Basic English displays our mother tongue in a very respectable form with a vocabulary of 850 items. Whatever the merits of this system, it does suggest to us the advantages of economy in making a few words do the work of many. *Otra vez* is generally good enough to translate "again" into Spanish. Why, then, give a beginner the added burden of learning *de nuevo* and *volver a* plus infinitive as active vocabulary? If he learns them from his reading or his oral-drill class well enough to use them in speaking, so much the better. If he does not, he can still do very well with *otra vez*. This is not an argument against an eventual acquisition of variety and elegance in style. We shall hope that these come in time. Meanwhile, we are concerned above all with a student's learning in two or three years to express himself within modest limits in acceptable Spanish. Whether we employ a "natural" or "inductive" method, or simply insist upon translation from English to Spanish, the principle holds true. The same basic list of concepts will serve for any one of the various methods of teaching.

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The third annual northwestern State College Foreign Language Conference will be held on May 7 and 8, 1948, at Natchitoches, Louisiana.

The theme of this year's conference is "New Horizons through Foreign Language Study." The maximum time which can be allowed a paper is twenty minutes, but shorter papers are most welcome. Those interested in reading papers are requested to write promptly to Professor G. Waldo Dunnington, Director of the Conference, Box 1084, Northwestern State College, Natchitoches, Louisiana, giving title of the paper and number of minutes required for presentation.

“*Anschaulichkeit*” in the Teaching of Languages

A CARTOON clipping which depicted an object lesson in a French class appeared once on our Modern Language bulletin board at the University of Oklahoma. The teacher, a slip of a girl, pointed with one hand at the name of the object on the blackboard, with the other at the object. The object was a roaring, very carnivorous tiger. The evidence of complete attention in the students' faces was unmistakable. We may assume that *that* class never forgot *le tigre*.

There are several hundred thousand more objects which we cannot conveniently bring into our classroom, like skyscrapers, the United States Congress, the gold at Fort Knox and the Andromeda Nebula. Object lessons, especially in our bare classrooms, have very severe limitations. Yet they constitute one of several desperate attempts to teach the language the “natural” way. We probably all agree that the one and only natural way to learn a language is to live in the native environment of that language. That is the “Natural Method” *par excellence*. Does it not follow, then, that the closer we can come to this natural way in our language teaching the more effective it will be? Let us determine why learning the language in the native environment is the best way.

In the native environment the learner *lives* what he hears, reads or speaks in the foreign language. He perceives an object, action, concept, situation or mood and simultaneously or subsequently comprehends, in hearing and reading, the foreign expression of this perception or, in speaking, himself gives foreign expression to it. He matches image with expression. He matches the concept with its symbol in the foreign medium of expression. Concept and foreign symbol are fused into one without the interposition, without the interference of the English symbol. In other words, there is no translation from and into English: comprehension and expression are direct.

What can we do, in academic language teaching, to approximate the conditions of the native environment, to simulate this “School of Life”? Before offering my suggestions, let me mention briefly two approaches whose nature puts them outside the limits of this discussion. (1) Foreign language houses, as those of Middlebury, can accommodate but a very few of the nation's language students, and we are here concerned only with language teaching done under average conditions. (2) Object lessons in our classrooms are so limited in scope that, even though their use is favored whenever

practicable, they could not be made a part of the approach here offered for consideration.

Briefly then, this approach consists of the ingenious coordination, both in classroom teaching and in textbook writing, of the following:

- (1) the use of pictures
- (2) dramatization
- (3) definition in the foreign language
- (4) the use of context
- (5) the use of familiar subject matter

These five devices constitute the core of the approach. Before they are described, there should be mentioned two further procedures which play a subordinate role: (1) the use of cognates, (2) the use of English renderings.

The hundreds of cognates in the Germanic and Romance languages are extremely helpful, particularly in the early stages of instruction, and should be used for all they are worth. These are relegated to a subordinate position only because they in themselves do not constitute important *new* knowledge in the foreign medium and also because this procedure has very limited application to languages which are nearly devoid of cognates—for example, Russian. The translation of foreign expressions into English is, as it were, a "safety valve" which comes into play where the other devices seem to fail or are too inconvenient to use. However, the ingenious writer of texts, the skillful teacher will be able, without the use of English, to "get things across" which their less skilled colleagues would not even attempt. And, alas! any teacher may finally throw up his hands and give in to the Mortimer Snerds in his class.

A general idea of the approach can best be given by sketching its genesis and evolution in my teaching practice. It began in telling my classes stories in German. Whether it was on the first day of beginning German or in the last semester of advanced composition, the story was told without a word translated into English. Comprehension was assured by acting out what could be acted out, by quickly illustrating on the blackboard whatever my limited drawing ability would permit, by paraphrasing and explaining in German what could not be understood directly and by telling the story in such a way that the situation, the context, would make obvious the meaning of new words and expressions whenever possible. Any one of these devices would have been inadequate to do the job, but, used together, they produced splendid results. This procedure has been transferred to the printed page as far as that could be done.¹

The features of the approach will now be described in detail.

(1) *The use of pictures.* Nearly three hundred years ago Comenius published his *Orbis Pictus, The World in Pictures*. His thesis, was, "Nothing is in

¹ Wiens, Gerhard, *Bilderlesebuch für Anfänger*. Henry Holt and Company, 1940.

the understanding which has not previously been in the senses." Accordingly each Latin word was preceded by an illustration. This is not the time to discuss the merits of the various ways in which pictures have been used in language teaching but to explain how I have used them. In the classroom, then, as I tell the story or give an informative or descriptive talk, I quickly sketch on the board what needs or can be illustrated. Speed of execution is the main requirement; artistic quality, although desirable, is not essential. In the *Bilderlesebuch* the pictures were put into the sentence immediately after the word or expression to be interpreted. The illustrations are an integral part of the book; they give life to the story and in turn are given vitality by it. They are no longer just part of a lifeless chart or merely stopping points in a monotonous catalog of words. It seems to me that the condescending attitude of some language teachers toward the use of pictures ("very cute and amusing, all right for children, but for adults—") is unwarranted. Look around you and witness the thousand and one ways in which pictures are used. Is the mathematician immature because he draws geometric figures when he wants to prove a theorem? The use of illustrations is pedagogically sound.² It is high time that we inquire more aggressively into the pedagogical soundness of some traditional practices which, apparently, are considered mature and scholarly just because they are abstract and bookish and as far removed from real life as is, too often, the scholar's dusty den.

(2) *Dramatization*. In the belief that perception is always better than translation I act out what cannot be illustrated readily. Acting, too, has its limitations, but you do not know how much of life can be thus presented until you try it. Hundreds of actions, conditions, moods, feelings, manners, characters come to life before the eyes of a delighted and, mind you, intensely interested class. When they hang on your lips, watch the changing moods of your face, follow your every gesture and react to all that happens with irrepressible spontaneity—then you know that they are living what you are speaking. You are speaking a foreign language, but they do not know it. They are *experiencing* the foreign language. English does not exist for them. For a brief span they are Germans, Russians, Frenchmen, Spaniards. No one can claim that under such conditions they still translate mentally into English. The teacher has achieved direct comprehension—and that is an achievement indeed!

The transfer of dramatic representation to the printed page requires the assistance of a good artist—a cartoonist, if possible, of "New Yorker" caliber. But even he can never replace the teacher-actor. Only a sound film might do that. Nevertheless, a great deal of the drama of life can be pre-

² Cf. Rose, Ernst, "Illustrative Material in Conversation Classes," *The Modern Language Journal*, XXX, 2 (February, 1946), pp. 84-88, and the references given in this provocative article.

sented in still pictures (witness our "comic pages"), and the skillful textbook writer who can count on a good artist will not feel so helpless after all.

(3) *Definition or explanation in the foreign medium.* As the student's grasp of the foreign language increases, this device can be used more and more freely. New words and expressions are defined or explained in terms of words and expressions already known to the student. Sometimes, when antonyms or synonyms are lacking or definition is difficult, a situation may be invented to explain the word indirectly. On the printed page these definitions and explanations are given in footnotes. The practice in previously learned words and expressions is an incidental gain in this procedure.

(4) *The methodical use of context.* If you were taking a Russian for a drive in your car and were traveling faster and faster until he finally pleaded in a frightened voice, "*Radi boga, poteeshe!*"—you would know immediately that he was not asking you to step on the gas. There are countless occasions in real life and in books where the situation, the context, will make the meaning of words and whole expressions perfectly clear. There are many others, not so obvious, where a little reasoning will bring clarity. In classroom procedure and in the writing of reading texts we must try, wherever possible, to aid direct comprehension by the skillful use of context.

(5) *The use of familiar subject matter.* This ties in very closely with the preceding point. We are trying to teach the language, not to impart new knowledge of facts. We must use subject matter familiar to the student as long as such familiarity aids the learning of the language. Unfamiliar subject matter may be used in increasing amounts as the student's knowledge of the language grows, without interfering with the learning process and even aiding it. But it is poor pedagogy for an elementary German reader to start out by talking about German cities, rivers, schools, customs. Familiar subject matter means all the things about life and the world that everybody knows—our daily life, work and play, the myriad activities of man, animal and plant, of the city, the state, the nation, the world, the universe. What a vast treasury to draw upon at will! Here are countless units of knowledge, physical, mental and psychic experiences, that are an integral part of the student's being. The mental and psychic associations are all ready-made for us and well made—so well made that nothing can tear them asunder. We simply substitute foreign for English symbols in these units or patterns and reap the benefit of the student's life-long mental growth. Let me illustrate. One day *Weihnachten* came up in class. The students were told: "*Der 25. Dezember ist Weihnachten.*" Then was brought in all the Christmas lore—Santa Claus, chimney, fireplace, socks, letters to Santa, "good boys and girls," the most joked about Christmas gifts: the tie and the electric train which daddie plays with and so forth. Along well-worn mental paths the class followed me, smoothly, delightedly. English translation? Who ever heard of English!

This illustration should also serve to refute the possible objection that familiar subject matter is dull—at least not as interesting as new material. It is not dull if presented right. A great deal of unknown material can be presented in close association with familiar subject matter and thus share in the benefits of familiarity. And, as indicated before, the exclusive use of familiar subject matter is not at all advocated. Indeed, new subject matter should be introduced as quickly as feasible, especially in the form of unadulterated, high-quality specimens of the foreign literature.

These five devices, then, characterize my approach: the use of illustrations, dramatization, rendering in the foreign medium, context and familiar subject matter. The illustrations are only the most striking feature. The other devices are equally important. They all supplement and aid each other. Where one device cannot be used adequately or at all, another is used. The method is like a good tool chest at the disposal of a skilled worker. One should not try to drive in a nail with a screwdriver nor put in a screw with a hammer, but with both tools it is possible to do both jobs efficiently and without upsetting one's equanimity. It seems to me that my assortment of tools is adequate to do a good job, even though they obviously can and should be improved and refined.

Where can this approach be used to greatest advantage? It finds its best and most important application in the beginning course, the first year, particularly the first semester. The other important application is in composition and conversation courses. In such courses there should be very little, if any, translation from English into the foreign medium but rather direct expression of life experienced actually or in the imagination.

It goes without saying that the student's active participation is an essential part of this approach. From the very beginning the student should be called upon to reproduce in speech what the teacher and the reading text have presented. The teacher or a student may illustrate and act out the story silently and let the students, singly or in small groups, be the narrators. After sufficient practice the students may then tell the story without the aid of illustration or dramatization. Questions and answers on the story are also excellent practice. The oral work may be supplemented by practice in writing. The amount of oral and written reproduction will vary naturally with the aims of the course. It is, however, my belief that even a course which aims primarily at a reading knowledge benefits from a certain amount of oral and written practice.

The advantages, in my opinion, of this approach are:

(1) First and foremost, it has life. Its subject matter is life, the teacher lives it as he presents it, the student lives it as he absorbs it with his whole being—his body, his mind, his heart. Language learning, like true learning in any field of knowledge, is a dead thing if undertaken solely as an intellectual activity. Nothing has life that does not move us. This may sound

romantic, but is not man a romanticist at heart? "*Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie, und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.*"

(2) This approach develops *Sprachgefühl*. It develops *Sprachgefühl* in the narrow meaning of the word—that is, a feeling for the grammatical and idiomatic characteristics of the language. It paves the way for the cultivation of *Sprachgefühl* in the larger meaning of the word—a sense of style, a keen appreciation of the artistic use of the language which makes *Faust* a work of art in German and a second-rate play in translation. The student learns the foreign language directly; there is no English to interfere, to pull and twist the foreign expressions out of shape, to spoil the savoring of artistic expression. Furthermore, through constant practice in hearing and reproducing his teacher's intonation of the foreign speech, he develops a fine sense of the "tone color" of the language. This sense is essential for truly aesthetic appreciation of the language and its literature.

(3) This approach speeds up the learning process. The impressions made on the student's mind by new language units when presented in this manner are always stronger than when presented in the traditional way. Furthermore, the new language units are absorbed with a great variety of mental associations which aid recognition and recall.

(4) Since the student is constantly called upon to reason out the unknown from the known, his linguistic reasoning faculty is greatly developed. This faculty is extremely important in his subsequent use of the language, particularly if his studies are not continued beyond the beginning stage, which, after all, is the case with the vast majority of the students in our language classes.

(5) This approach trains the student from the beginning in direct comprehension and expression in the foreign language instead of developing the pernicious habit of mental translation from and into English. We can hardly overestimate the harm done to direct comprehension and expression—the only genuine comprehension and expression—when we impart the language by means of translation and consistently require reproduction from and into English. Translation should be used in language teaching only when necessary to assure accuracy of comprehension and expression or when other means are not practicable. But to make translation a regular practice is medieval scholasticism, pedagogically unsound and psychologically injurious.

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Problems in the Cultural Approach

A LANGUAGE does not exist without a nation who used it or has used it in a certain country at a certain time. Every language has its evolution, correlated to the evolution of its nation and country. Therefore, teaching of a language ought to include the instruction about the people and their country, and there are many phases in language studies when a "cultural approach" is organic and necessary.

Consequently, the teacher of languages ought to be very well informed and should try to acquire a wide and understanding outlook on the various parts of foreign civilization (history, philosophy, economic life, music, arts, geography, education and others). He, therefore, has to work not only on the language but also on increasing his knowledge of the cultural background of the language. Thus pertinent courses in universities and teachers colleges become a necessity. The problem is not whether, but how to present the cultural material.

It is hardly advisable to set apart a portion of the language period in school or to designate a certain day solely for "culture." The language teacher should not, abruptly and systematically, change into a teacher of history or music and transform his language class into a class of some other subject. It cannot be his duty—and very often is beyond his ability—to compete with the aims of teachers of other subjects. The history and music teachers, on the average, will perform that duty much better than he could do.

Language and civilization are interrelated—a fact which teacher and students should always keep in mind. Just as modern methods call for functional grammar teaching, cultural approach, too, ought to be functional—that is, relevant to the language teaching situation. When the need or the interest arises—and only then—the teacher should explain a current event, a passage, a novel, a poem, an idiom, from the angle of culture. He should do it expertly but in a natural way, transmitting all the "culture" that is necessary for the understanding of the subject matter. These explanations, if possible, should not be considered—neither by the teacher nor by the students—part of the material of an assignment of test; they should be means of help, not of menace.

Modern language textbooks often include "cultural" chapters or lessons in the native or foreign tongues, or they are entirely based on the principle of "culture." It seems to me that material on civilization written in the students' native language could be entirely discarded without any harm to the objectives of modern language teaching. Neither the reading approach nor

the conversational method can make much use of it. The material in the foreign language may be more useful. No doubt, cultural material presented in that way is often very interesting—for the teacher. The student often rebels against or suffers from it—even the one who is gifted and interested in languages and who has a fair background in history. Reading pages listing a succession of foreign names, numbers of population, areas, dates, cannot bring about anything else but tiresome boredom. If, however, a cultural textbook shows a presentation as interesting as the facts it contains, it easily becomes superior to the commonly used textbook which is based on isolated sentences, colorless statements and descriptions, artificial dialogues and childish stories.

A review grammar—if the teacher finds it necessary to use one—may draw its practice material entirely from “culture” and thus teach grammatical and cultural facts simultaneously. Cultural “readers,” however, like fictitious travelogues, may provoke negative reactions. A “reader” should be genuine, thrilling, moving or witty. Our cultural readers often do not show any of those qualities. The students forget the content quickly, lock, stock and barrel—that is, the cultural as well as the language instruction. However, a great poem, a passage in a great novel or a story in their original forms may convey to the student an indelible impression or feeling of one of the aspects of a foreign civilization, of a foreign people and country.

The uniqueness and strangeness of the foreign civilization, its peculiar flavor and charm, the singular nature of a country’s forests and mountains, farmers and students, streets and parks, can only inspire the student and arouse his interest if they are encountered in original, good literature and original, good language and are read under the tactful and skillful guidance of the teacher. Well selected readers will probably give the student a more vivid picture of Norman peasants, Mexican peons, the Quai Malaquais, the Argentine pampa, Madame Curie and Pancho Villa than special cultural chapters or books.

Much of the cultural explanation and guidance depends, of course, on the personality and experience of the teacher as well as on the interests of the class. If the teacher has ever been in the foreign country, his instruction will be, as a rule, more inspiring and suggestive. An occasional anecdote, a souvenir brought from abroad, will interest and stimulate students much more than the best description in a book.

That—according to certain Boards of Education—a limited set of culture essentials has to be covered in class cannot be of imperative value. If the foreign language teacher has never mentioned a certain mountain, date or artist in class, the student will always be able to look up those facts somewhere by himself whenever he should need them (while still in school or later as an adult). But never will he be able to “look up” the foreign language, gain within a few minutes the ability and pleasure of reading and

speaking it intelligently, correctly and quickly, and acquire the understanding of the peculiarity of the foreign literature. Those are values and skills which he can only get through good instruction, and the teacher should concentrate on those objectives, even at the cost of names on an alleged cultural "must list."

On the other hand, whenever the country of the language being studied is prominently in the news, the teacher should grasp at the opportunity of starting a discussion in class; he should use a foreign language paper, if possible, although the topical events and persons may have never been on a syllabus list. Requirements of minimum essentials of civilization can only be arbitrary anyway, and they may lead in practice to memorizing of almost meaningless names. There is no use having students who have never seen a good painting, or who do not know how to appreciate its value, learn the names of Manet or Goya. The teacher ought rather to take his students to the museum or have them see prints or slides of characteristic paintings. Even though they may later forget the name of El Greco, they still will remember the mystical ecstasy of the Spanish sixteenth century; and even when they will have forgotten the name of Fragonard, they still may remember the playful charm of the French Rococo. Likewise, instead of cramming the names of Gounod and Granados, the students should rather listen to records or the radio, or go to the opera. They may forget the names but hardly the enjoyment which they have experienced. Consequently, the culture questions of certain city-wide and state-wide tests could be entirely dropped. They often ask for names and facts which are neither characteristic of, nor important to, the foreign civilization and even may convey a wrong evaluation of the foreign culture. After all, neither Carmen Miranda nor Charles Boyer should take up one tenth of the culture quiz; the ratio of their cultural importance to the general Hispanic or French culture is far from being one to ten. In this instance sugarcoating cannot be the right motivation. Furthermore the combination of Carmen Miranda and Cervantes, or Maurice Chevalier and Pascal, in the same test is a startling association and a question of taste.

Grasse is the center of the French perfume industry; but why should a student know that at a time when he still struggles with the most elementary French constructions and when the easiest French sentences often are puzzles without solution for him? Do *lycée* students in France know it? Does the knowledge of that name deserve as much credit in the grading of the paper as, say, the ability to choose the correct pronoun (*qu'est-ce que* and not *qui*)? If not properly handled, the entire cultural program may look like a dumping ground of outdated and useless facts, instead of becoming a beautiful playground in the hard study of a foreign language.

The problem of selecting the right cultural material is of greater importance when the foreign nation dealt with in class happens to be the military

or ideological enemy of the students' country. The dangers of overemphasizing the dark sides or, sometimes, the shining parts of the enemy's civilization are very great. On the other hand, they cannot be avoided by just abandoning the culture teaching since in times of tension or war the teaching of those cultural facts may be more useful and interesting than ever. Here lies a greater intellectual and ethical challenge than ever to approach objectivity and a greater opportunity and stimulation for discussions, an advantage of which the language teacher should make the greatest use.

It is extremely doubtful whether one can approach the "spirit of a nation" by learning names of mountains, rivers, painters or provinces. This also holds true for proverbs. Since the literary age of Romanticism, folk tales, folk riddles, proverbs and the like have been considered to be reflections of the genuine and creative spirit of a nation. Now we know that those literary products are international wealth, articles of import and export and, as a rule, not at all characteristic of a certain country. There are analogous proverbs in most languages of Western civilization.¹ Furthermore, proverbs of the same language sometimes contradict each other. It, therefore, often is a waste of time having students memorize proverbs only for their supposed cultural value. The language of the proverbs retaining obsolete words and forms may, furthermore, confuse the beginner, though their conciseness and imagery are rather appealing.

In a city-wide test for second-term high school French, the student who was able to reproduce from memory ten French proverbs was awarded one fifth of the total credit. In this case, cultural approach is not at all far from the traditional word-centered school and its excess in memorizing and quoting. If there has to be any memorizing, well chosen aphorisms, little poems, songs, are much more suitable than proverbs, whose frequently stale and petty bourgeois ethics hardly appeal to the more sophisticated student. While proverbs have a very vague cultural or ethnological background, aphorisms and poems may be selected as definitely characteristic of an outstanding personality, a cultural period, a literary trend, a country. Above all, they are preferable for their superior intellectual and literary values, their melody and wit.

In conclusion we may say that cultural approach undoubtedly lends more life and meaning to the study of languages, but its qualitative and quantitative factors should not be overlooked.

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¹ J. Delcourt thinks in his article "On French Proverbs and Idioms," *FR*, XX(1946), p. 137, that the proverbs of his list are "all more or less exclusively French," However, items 8, 9, 17, 22 and 24, for instance, have German equivalents.

Some Aspects of Teaching Russian

ONE of the striking phenomena of the post-war period in American universities and colleges has been the upsurge of interest in Russian language teaching. The swing upward has been so great, as we know, as to have transformed completely the statistical picture so far as the teaching of Russian is concerned. In December 1941, a mere 19 colleges and universities offered Russian; now the number is well over a hundred.

It is only natural if we teachers of Russian have perhaps become conditioned to expect news of this flattering sort to continue forever. Perhaps it will. There is still, of course, a vast number of colleges, and even of universities, where Russian is as yet not offered and where a certain demand exists that will lead in time to its inclusion in the curriculum.

It is far more likely, however, that from now on the trend toward Russian, although in general forward, will be gradual rather than feverish, as since 1941 it has been. It is to be expected—and the serious teacher will hold this to be all to the good—that Russian will survive in the curricula of our colleges and universities only where it is soundly rooted in an actual desire on the part of the students and where it is as competently taught as are German and French and Spanish. It will be added to the number of languages offered only where trained and inspiring teachers are clearly available.

This, then, is the time for teachers of Russian to cease congratulating themselves on the amazing progress which their part of the modern language profession has made since 1941 and to take stock. Word comes that in one of our leading eastern polytechnical schools, where Russian was to have been introduced this year, an insufficient number of students registered for the course and it was abandoned. News like this we have not been hearing lately because up to now the word has been of students crowding to take the language wherever it was announced. We are entering the second phase of our post-war history, and it is a good time to think over certain aspects of our work.

As teachers of Russian, we have certain things to be grateful for, the first being that the language carries on in spite of the rising political tension and in defiance, as it seems, of the friction existing between the Soviet Union and the United States. In the second place, with the colleges and universities overcrowded as they are today, only students of superior ability are admitted, and of these we get the most capable since Russian is considered one of the more difficult subjects. Thirdly, college authorities are under the impression that the mastery of Russian requires a greater amount

of time than other languages and are willing to give more hours to us than to the others. Finally, the experience and findings of the ASTP have had a beneficial effect on the attitude toward languages in general, and most institutions are abandoning the 3-point course in favor of an intensive program of one type or another. This is seen in the case of Yale, which has ten hours for Russian on the elementary level, Smith which has nine and Vassar where we have six. Oral practice is provided for both elementary and intermediate courses. The results achieved by ASTP have at last dispelled the old idea that Americans could not learn foreign languages, and colleges are now fully aware that the reason for the old fallacy was the small amount of time allotted to language study. They are doing all in their power to correct the situation.

In general the experimentation in methods which accompanied the ASTP and which has been going on since in the field of language teaching has been helpful and beneficial, but a few curious techniques have come out of the experimentation which seem to me positively harmful. In view of all the circumstances in our favor, listed above, it seems to me wrong to transform the superior students who come to us into five-year olds and not give them the Russian alphabet from the very start. Yet in some institutions the language is taught *with the Latin alphabet* and for the first six or eight weeks entirely by ear. Such a method seems to say: Russian is a tongue so foreign to the student that its mastery is practically impossible using ordinary methods. It makes Russian seem an Oriental tongue rather than, as it is, Indo-European as much as are French, Spanish or German, or even English.

Are not those who postpone the study of the alphabet creating the impression that Russian is harder than it is and thus, by implication, driving students away? After all, German script is taught in some secondary schools in this country even now, and many girls who are unable to meet college standards go to business schools where they have to learn an alphabet that is just as new and strange as the Russian.

The threefold approach seems to me to be a saner method than the exclusively aural-oral. Why not adapt to our purpose the habits already acquired by students? Psychologists claim that eighty to eighty-seven per cent of what we see we remember. In American schools the greatest emphasis is placed on sight memory. As language teachers we should take every advantage of this training and exploit it to the student's good, not neglecting, meanwhile, the other two channels for language assimilation mentioned above.

Oral work has been neglected in the past in this country, but at present it is receiving proper recognition. Now the only problem is that of technique. The student should be prepared in such a way that he is ready for both written and also oral final examinations. I still cannot get over the fact that the so-called "oral test" given to candidates applying for a certificate

to teach languages in the State of New York consists of a *written* examination. Yet conversation classes are only too often a tedious and discouraging experience for the student. They must not be conducted extemporaneously. This is a basic rule. So conducted, either the pupils produce a few lame sentences after considerable delay and hesitation or else the time is taken up by what amounts to an oration by the instructor.

The conversation class must be based on material previously in the students' hands and mastered by them outside of class time. The material must, of course, synchronize with or parallel that which makes up the main body of the course—the so-called “grammar.” At Vassar we have 22 students in the elementary class. For three periods a week this class is divided into groups of six to eight for oral drill. They come to class with certain definite material in mind—perhaps, for example, Tolstoy's description of his classroom from *Detstvo i Otrochestvo*. Questions are asked on this, and then the vocabulary learned here is quickly applied to the students' own experience. They discuss their own classroom, for example, and this leads into all sorts of by-paths where antonyms, synonyms and new idioms are to be encountered. Or we choose a very simple letter from the correspondence of Pushkin, say, or of Chekhov. The students write a letter in which the same or similar circumstances are handled. Then this is discussed in class. At every step in this process—which requires great inventiveness on the instructor's part and thorough preparation in advance by the students—pronunciation is stressed. Naturally an oral drill class cannot be placed in charge of a teacher whose own pronunciation is short of the most perfect. Unfortunately, Brooklyn Russian can be as bad as Brooklyn English, and for the oral class only a well-educated native Russian will do.

Memorization plays a part in the oral class although committing to memory is never required. Easy poems, such as Lermontov's “*Dva Velikana*,” “*Párus*,” “*Gornye Vershiny*,” chosen for their abundance of vowels, are very helpful—or the poem “*V shapke zolota litovo*,” with its wonderful vocal quality. These poems may be read purely with a view to enjoyment, and soon the students will be found learning them by heart of their own accord. They are the most effective means of teaching good pronunciation.

Also conducive to the goal of adequate pronunciation are songs. Here records will be found useful: records of such Soviet songs as “*Kto evo znaet*,” “*Kalinka*,” or the well-known “*Stenka Razin*,” “*Vdol da po rechke*” and even “*Ochi chernye*.” On the intermediate level poems with music by Tchaikovsky, Grechaninov or Glinka, preferably with male voices, are useful. All this enlivens the oral period, the greatest enemy of whose success is boredom, gives the student a chance to hear perfect Russian and introduces him, at the same time, to Russian poetry. A glee club and a dramatic *kruzhok* are also helpful.

A useful way of developing comprehension in the oral class is to confront

the students with a number of true and false statements in Russian. Interpolate in a number of true statements such a sentence as "The cat is sitting on the ceiling" and see how many spot its absurdity and how quickly. This type of exercise is useful from the beginning and may be applied on the intermediate level with whole paragraphs. Never, however, must anything be placed before the student which is grammatically or idiomatically incorrect. This type of exercise is nefarious in the extreme and only teaches what must later be unlearned.

Much is said of the need of proper textbooks in the Russian field, especially of the need for an adequate elementary text. Of course, the results achieved in a given class depend in the last analysis on the teacher, not on the textbook he uses. Yet it is still true that the need is great for elementary texts free from errors in the language itself and graded according to a word frequency count. Where Americans have written grammars in German and French, they have not trusted their own infallibility but have, in all modesty, sought out the collaboration of native Germans and Frenchmen, thus avoiding errors in the language. This has not been the case in the Russian field. It is discouraging indeed to find *tepereshnii russkii istrebitel* in the very first lesson of a primer. Because of the textbook situation we are obliged to resort to mimeographed material, which we write ourselves, and to spend countless hours typing stencils.

Graded readers are as grave a need in our field as grammars. Here the modest Heath series beginning with *Taman'* is of some help, though I confess that the idea of "simplifying" a literary masterpiece still seems somewhat shocking to me.

It is highly desirable, from the language teacher's point of view, that more courses in Russian civilization be given in English. These would have the effect of encouraging undergraduates to enroll in language courses and would keep him interested at a time when he is not yet able to read serious material in Russian. In some colleges, unfortunately, such courses, if offered in the Russian division, are viewed as an encroachment on the territory of other departments. At Vassar we are not thus handicapped. Here, thanks to the remarkable work of the late Professor Strelsky, we have courses in English covering the Russian drama and novel as well as semester courses on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

Courses in English will help to correct the undergraduate's present very hazy notion of Russia. One day a few years ago, a blonde little freshman breezed into my office and asked for information about Russian women. She was going to write a paper for her class in English composition. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "I am so enthusiastic about Russian women and what they have done in this war!" I gave her a reading list and three weeks later her masterpiece was on my desk. To my horror this is what I read on the first page: "Before the Revolution of 1917 the Russians were such barbarians

that they were all polygamous." I later discovered that she had read *The Women of Soviet Asia* by Fannina Halle. When she came for her paper, I showed her the map on the wall and pointed out to her that we have in our population of 193,000,000 some eighteen million Mohammedans; these were formerly polygamous but are required by Soviet law to be monogamous as marriage is at present governed not by religious but by civil law. She looked at the map. "Oh," she cried, "I didn't know it was so big!" Little wonder, as geography is not taught beyond the seventh grade!

There is a marked discrepancy between the intellectual maturity of the college student and his facility in the language, and this we have to face as a challenge. We must admit that books designed for the elementary class—I refer not only to the antiquated and much criticized Bondar but also to the most recent publications—are full of anecdotes insipid in the extreme. This places on our shoulders the task of imparting in simplest language the various aspects of Russian culture, linking interesting information with the vocabulary as it comes along. For instance, in explaining the adjectives *rysokii*, *nizkii*, we can say that most Russian rivers flow from north to south or south to north and that the western bank is always higher, due to the rotation of the earth. For this reason Russians are always at a disadvantage when invaded by the Germans. We can mention the importance of this factor in the war and in this connection emphasize the heroic resistance of the Russian people.

In studying the seasons, harvests and crops we can speak of up-to-date developments such as Machine Tractor Stations, collective farms and others—always, of course, in an objective manner. Learning the vocabulary for fruits and trees, we may touch on the work of Michurin, the Russian Luther Burbank; when drilling on the verbs of motion, we may bring in the life and artistry of Anna Pavlova and the contributions of the Russian ballet. After describing the features of the human face in general, the students may be asked to write compositions on the portrait of Tolstoy or of Pushkin. Those interested in music may be urged to describe the features and countenance of Rachmaninoff or Chaliapin. The teacher may at this point give a short biography of the writer or musician, as the case may be.

Perhaps the teacher's most important function of all in helping the student to master Russian is to make his pupil *root and compound conscious*. It is our duty, first of all, to systematize the material to be learned in such a way as to reduce to a minimum the amount to be acquired by rote. Russian, more than any of the more familiar languages of Europe, owes its extreme richness to compounds and derivatives, and it is this that becomes our salvation. An undergraduate is frightened indeed when confronted with words like *sovershenstvo*, *prinadlezhnosti* and the like. Yet, if properly trained from the very start on such simple words as *pisat*—*pisatel*, and later on compounds of *hodit*, *ezdit*, *nosit*, *vodit*, he will understand a great deal

by intuition and actually welcome, rather than fear, the new words as they greet him. I require every student to have a set of index cards for these basic roots (one student accused me of making a *post-mortem* out of every verb!) so that he may acquire with the least possible effort a large passive vocabulary. Helpful in this connection are Patrick's *Roots of the Russian Language*, Lowe's *Russian Roots and Compounds* and Forbes' *Second Book of Verbs*, but these are of value solely for reference. The material found in these should in the future be integrated into the elementary textbook. So far no class manual has taken full advantage of this characteristic of our language.

Root consciousness will greatly simplify the explanation of iterative and durative verbs and their many compounds. Only in a single instance have I seen a clear presentation of these abstract and concrete verbs, and that is in the manuscript of Professor George Znamensky's *Beginner's Manual, Conversational Russian*. Professor Znamensky has tried out the root-consciousness approach with great success at Harvard, Radcliffe and MIT and is at present using the above manual in mimeographed form. We look forward to its publication with keen anticipation. Here at least we have a class-book by a qualified native who was formerly principal of a classical *gymnasium* and a teacher of Russian, yet who understands thoroughly the psychology of the American student who is to be taught.

As roots have been neglected in our teaching up to now, so also have cognates and the relationship of Russian to other Indo-European languages. Here it becomes obvious that we teachers of Russian are in dire need of an etymological dictionary. The one compiled in 1915 by Preobrajensky goes only through the letter C, and so far I have seen a copy of it only in the New York Public Library. The Soviet Academy is planning to publish an etymological dictionary in fifteen volumes, but its publication is a long way off, and anyway it will be too expensive for teachers to buy. It would seem worthwhile for the American Council of Learned Societies to sponsor the compilation and publication of such a work in our own country.

Finally, I should like to make an appeal to my fellow-Russians in the United States, who make up the great reservoir from which most of the teachers of Russian are drawn, to study English and to master it thoroughly. This is very important. When a student asks the precise meaning of *ya ezdil v Moskvu*, he should not receive as his answer, "I went to Moscow." In this respect—the learning of English, pedagogical training, proper certification and so on—teachers of Russian have a duty to meet the highest standards of the teaching profession so that with each year added dignity and prestige may accrue to the branch of modern language teaching which is represented by them.

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Spanish in the Junior High School

FOR some time, the teachers of foreign languages in the Seattle Public Schools have been examining, revising, enlarging, enriching and revitalizing the language curriculum. This is an effort to center the content area and procedures of the learning technique more directly around the pupil's daily life, his experiences, his problems, his needs and pleasures and his relationship to others in this evolving world of which he is a part. Because of an increasing need for an awareness of the interdependence of the individual and of nations of this world, language teaching needs to be based on a philosophy of language and life which prepares people to work together effectively, peacefully and with appreciation, tolerance and understanding.

Why do foreign people live, act, behave the way they do? Enriching the curriculum with this cultural approach, strengthened by the appearance of a native informant in the classroom from time to time, the language classes, by virtue of such cultural insights, afford a means of creating a spirit of understanding, appreciation and tolerance for foreign peoples, whose language, life, literature and geography, civilization, contributions and influence they study.

The teacher tries to provide environments and experiences within the understanding, age level and ability of the pupil, arranging and manipulating these so as to produce ideas within the child, provide means for expressing these ideas and lead the child to the best way of ordering, organizing and making his ideas the property of others. This sharing of experiences and interests with others, this feeling of power and comfort and a greater awareness of his own experiences, plus the constructive evaluation thereof, helps lead to a satisfactory philosophy of life; it affords a greater growth and development of the whole individual as he endeavors to find better ways of doing, utilizing and enjoying desirable things in life.

It is usually conceded that the best way to develop the whole individual is to begin early, and language learning is no exception. On the premise that foreign language is more naturally learned and more easily spoken in the earlier years of life, Seattle is extending such a foreign language program down into the seventh, eighth and ninth grades of junior high (in Edmond Meany and Washington) on an experimental basis, the aims and objectives being similar to those of the high school curriculum. The difference lies mainly in the quantity and content area, the speed and degree of skill and the approach, which must be gaged by the limitations involved in the age, environmental experiences and abilities of the group.

Understanding the language, aural comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, respect *for* and appreciation *of* the foreign people, their country, their language, culture and civilization: these are the main aims and objectives.

The instruction is to be pupil centered, geared toward the development of the whole individual and the liberation of pupil energy in creative thought. Besides providing the set-up to give the background of experiences calling for communication of ideas and language power, there will also be ample opportunity to develop initiative, leadership, responsibility, cooperation and good citizenship within the group.

The approach is conversational since the communication of ideas through *speech first* seems most practical at this age. Patience and repetition are key notes in the procedure, the pupils speaking by imitating the teacher's sounds. Only when speech and understanding are satisfactory does the class see the words in spelling. The real objects, pictures thereof, miniatures, pantomimes, dramatizations or any other devices are used to avoid speaking English while learning the foreign speech. English is resorted to only as a necessity, for the sake of clarity.

It is advisable to create interest in the foreign language and people the first hour of class by an informal discussion in English aimed at revealing the reasons for language study, the values one may gain from such study and an enumeration of—in this case—the Spanish influences about us, in our homes, our clothing, jewelry, furniture, commercial articles, place and street names, music, art, programs and the like. This can be followed by the admonition to be on the alert for other Spanish influences encountered daily, to record them and to share them with the group. This is a good introduction to the cultural content to be taught, paves the way for a realization of our debt to the foreign peoples and helps build respect and tolerance as the cultural course progresses.

Pupils always enjoy spoken Spanish the first day. They like answering the roll call in Spanish, greeting, farewells and as much vocabulary as time allows after the explanation of the introductory main differences and similarities between Spanish and English sounds. Experience has proved that progress is rapid and interest is keenest when speech begins the first days.

Writing *a, e, i, o, u* on the blackboard, in large letters, with circles around the weak vowels *i* and *u*, affords a quick introduction to vowels and diphthongs. The five sounds are established individually. Then the diphthongs are treated as such by combining *i* or *u* after each vowel, before each vowel and finally together: *iu, ui*.

Then we are ready for classroom vocabulary—objects used by the pupils, seen in the classroom, on the walls—everything there, including the floor, ceiling and lights. The first given are the *la* words. They are pronounced by the teacher and repeated by the pupils as each object is lifted or indi-

cated. About three are presented alternately until recognized, then a couple or three more—all repeated over and over until sounds and recognition are established. Then all objects are placed on a table, and pupils volunteer to pass before the table and name them or to indicate those not placed on tables, or the teacher raises or indicates the object while the class identifies it in choral response.

The list is then put on the blackboard, accents and other marks being carefully explained. Pronunciation, individually and chorally, is reviewed, and the pupil copies the list in his notebook for study and written and oral test the next day. Sketches of the objects, instead of English labels, are required in the notebook.

Next come the *el* words, with a test later, then a compilation of all words in review, followed by another test to establish gender, spelling and recognition. The tests are always given without the use of English, the object being held up or pointed to definitely as the pupil writes. Later the question *¿Qué es esto?* is given. Each pupil speaks the question as he holds the object. Another pupil answers and then the group repeats in chorus. (Spelling comes later.)

The colors are then added—two lists—the masculine for the *el* words and the feminine for the *la* words. Flash cards, or art paper, are used for the colors, and the presentation is the same as that for the objects. Soon the color cards are placed on the blackboard tray and each pupil takes his turn going to the cards, naming all in order, the class volunteering corrections. To speed this procedure, one pupil places himself at the left end of the display, another pupil at the right end. As soon as the first finishes, the other begins from that end, and volunteers appear at each end as fast as one pupil leaves. This saves a lot of time, creates interest and enables the slower ones to get more drill and do a better job. No pupil failed to volunteer. One was overlooked and felt hurt until given his opportunity the following day. Classes have been keen to check; if one member did not get his turn, the group named him, and he did his work.

After the twelve colors are learned, objects representing each color are displayed by the teacher or pupils, the class or pupil naming the object using the correct color, gender and position of color. Then, in answer to the question *¿Qué es esto?* we had *Es el libro pardo, es la pluma parda*—and so on—for all objects possible.

The plurals come next. Pupils were asked to write in their notebooks the plurals of all the *el* and *la* words and to practice these alone and with colors. Class drill preceded and followed, with written tests the next day. The questions and answers: *¿Es blanco el libro? No es blanco; es rojo. ¿De qué color es la tinta? Es roja. Es la tinta roja.* Each pupil wrote ten original questions (as above) and answers in his notebook, some to require the negative answer, some the affirmative.

Then the numbers from zero to twenty were introduced, the fingers indicating progression. Next, we counted from zero to one hundred by tens and by hundreds to one thousand and by hundred thousands to millions, finally combining large numbers. Always time was reserved each day for review and repetition of material learned earlier in addition to drill on consonants and difficult sounds. Flash cards are invaluable here to avoid use of English and to hasten learning.

An effective plan to perpetuate a number drill for a given period of time, with the teacher initiating and correcting only, is to have one pupil rise and say *yo cuento*, counting from zero to twenty or as desired. Then the pupil commands the one seated in the diagonally opposite corner of the room to count, saying, *Cuenta Ud, señor*. The second pupil then repeats, giving a new command to the pupil farthest from him; thus the procedure continues until all numbers are used in all combinations of counting (ones, fives, tens and so on), each pupil participating. Or the pupils in one row speak with the ones in a row farthest from them to encourage good, audible sounds.

Another plan, especially when books are used, and reading is important, is to have boys read the questions and girls (or certain rows) answer the questions, without using books, or vice versa. This plan saves time, teacher's direction, encourages attention, affords valuable aural-oral power and gives the real practice to the pupil, with the teacher acting only as critic and instigator.

Thus our vocabulary grows from the functional classroom and school words and needs to the life outside, including the home, furniture, family, activities and courtesies therein; the animals, vegetables, fruits, meats, stores and objects therein; vendors, buying, bargaining and selling, ordering; traffic, firemen, policemen, baker, milkman; sanitation; forms of amusement and games, songs; fowls and birds, fish, flowers, insects; weather, months, days of the week, the seasons; vehicles of transportation; musical instruments; telling time, with a real alarm clock and hands that move; telling age; asking for and receiving information; locating objects and persons; expressing likes and dislikes, physical needs; and many useful activities and facts calling for the recognition and use of many verbs and forms of usage.

As much correlation as possible between other departments and groups is encouraged. The history, social sciences, music and art departments, the latter making flash cards, have cooperated willingly; and trained boys have given class time (as a school service) to operate motion picture machines to afford the cultural program in the various foreign language classes. Also, one foreign language teacher gave up her free period in order to teach songs and carols to groups where the regular teacher was unable to sing. Later other classes were combined during a few hours and sang together, both teachers participating, or the teacher who did not sing taught the class of

the other teacher while she instructed the singing in the other room. This correlation builds up interest and enthusiasm and encourages progress.

Pupils brought into the classroom every conceivable object—pictures, fruits, vegetables, original sketches, miniature collections of animals, live pets, including baby chickens, a white mouse, a canary, a toy telephone and a genuine desk telephone—all of which became new vocabulary for the group. All were sketched or painted in show card colors on separate cards or included on a colored, folding scroll-like wall chart to be used by the group permanently. For each word learned, a story centered around the object and using as many different expressions and phrases as possible was told. When the colored chart was stretched the width of the large room (on the board), it afforded excellent review material, and pupils volunteered or were asked to name the objects thereon. Then they volunteered to tell the story of the object, and as they finished their work, they commanded a classmate to tell the story of another animal or object or person to which they pointed, saying *Diga Ud. el cuento del gato*. The new story began: *Yo digo el cuento del gato*, and thus the group all participated as audience and speaker.

Many verbs are learned by activities, pantomime and dramatization. Even radical changing verbs (*cerrar, contar, costar, dormir*) are used early. *Yo cierro el libro. Cierre usted el libro. ¿Qué hace él? El cierra el libro.* The pupil closes his book and speaks the Spanish as he does the act. Another pupil asks what he is doing. The class in chorus first, then individually answers: *El cierra el libro*. The pupil then commands his classmate to close the book. When the latter pupil has done this, he introduces a new activity command: *Yo abro la caja. Abra usted la caja*, until all pupils get practice, suiting the activity to the statement. Later two pupils act together, saying *nosotros cerramos el libro*. The question follows: *¿Qué hacen ellos?* The answer: *Ellos cierran el libro*, gives practice in the third person plural of the verb without letting the pupil feel he is doing grammar.

Running, walking, throwing and catching a ball, drawing, cutting, placing objects, talking, writing, sitting down, rising, buying, selling, washing, bathing, looking at one's self, playing instruments and many other verbs are acted before the group, each pupil repeating in turn until all comprehend. Thus the subjunctive as used in the courteous commands is learned early in a functional way, not as subjunctive or grammar. The trick is easy when the pupil is taught to observe how we get the endings for the command of *ar* verbs: Notice the way *ar* verbs take *e* and *en* and all others take *a* and *an*. Also notice that all verbs beginning irregularly like *yo pongo* build their commands by adding the endings after the *g*, dropping the *o*. We call these verbs the *go* verbs and change them to *ponga* and *pongan uds.* By establishing the singular *usted* ending first, the plural is readily learned.

Reflexive verbs, in the present tense and in commands, are introduced

the same way the first semester by usage and action. Much repetition and drill are needed to establish the fact that not every verb has the extra pronouns. *Poner* and *ponerse* are troublesome ones. Pupils must be trained to observe that the endings *-arse*, *-erse*, *-irse*, are signals that call for the extra pronouns. English may have to be used to clarify, even while dramatizing. Endings follow the patterns already learned, but the affirmative commands require the pronoun in the natural place expected in English (after the verb) but with an accent added.

Besides the situations already mentioned that provide the set-up for ideas and the desire for communications in the classroom, there were others. The deep snow, cold weather and the resultant closing of school gave new vocabulary solicited by the classes: "What kind of weather is it? It is cold. It is snowing. The white snow. I like the snow. I skate, ski. I like to make a snow man. I throw snow balls. I catch the snow balls" and so forth.

Thanksgiving gave the opportunity for a fiesta menu prepared by each pupil, who listed his favorite foods and dishes and spoke about his good dinner and what he ate.

Christmas, with its *piñata*, carols, party, greetings and planning, evoked much enthusiasm and revealed good talent in the group. The *piñata* was made by pupils in each class, which learned the tradition back of it, prepared the necessary vocabulary to act the game in Spanish, organized leaders, collected a small fee from each member, bought sweets and nuts, wrapped them beautifully, put them in the *piñata*, played the game, using Spanish, and arranged the distribution of the sweets after the *piñata* was broken. Christmas in Mexico and Latin American countries was discussed. Games followed, and the class hour ended with the singing of Christmas carols previously taught. A copy of two carols for each pupil was the voluntary contribution of one pupil, who typed them the day before as her greeting to the group. So great was the enthusiasm in singing the carols in Spanish that a group of seventh grade pupils, carrying large candles, spent Christmas Eve serenading in Spanish and did a magnificent job of singing at the door of their teacher, who was amazed to realize they had memorized all the words and sang so effectively alone and unaccompanied. Surely this was an activity that extended beyond the classroom.

Saint Valentine's Day was fiesta time again, with a real mailbox (made by three pupils) set up on its own pedestal, all decorated and trimmed in white and pink fluted edging, with a red heart flag signaling mail within, and an appropriate label. The occasion was used to give educational value in Spanish to a seasonal experience in the child's life, and they loved it. A vocabulary was built to express the ideas the class wanted—Valentine greetings, messages, letters, postman, mailbox, I love you, sweetheart. All the usual phrases were learned. A general chairman, a program chairman, a refreshments chairman and two postmen served to expedite the party, which

followed the lesson, consuming the latter half of the hour. Each pupil put his Valentine in the box saying: *Yo pongo cartas de San Valentín en el buzón*. This young group responded in a surprising manner, in creative ingenuity, in cooperation and working together. Their contribution could not have been excelled by any high school group, either in planning or actual organization and execution of the other details. Very little help was given by the teacher, and only a few moments of class time were used in preparation and planning. The class was especially proud of their artistic mailbox and enjoyed describing it in Spanish.

A short time ago we were to have special visitations and the class wanted to do something original. As we were nearing the end of one text, had learned much vocabulary and many verbs and conversational phrases, it was decided that we would have a pet show, either with real pets or replicas thereof, that we would buy and sell by telephone or in person in the various shops and stores, and that we would tell stories and sing, working in groups of two or more persons. Two days before the date set, each pupil was allowed to choose a topic from three general headings and work out a story, dialogue or telephone conversation with one or more pupils. The next day each pupil wrote his name and working partner's name on the board under one of the general topics: (1) *Conversaciones por teléfono*. (2) *En las tiendas—Comprar y vender (caro y barato)*. Here the pupil was to illustrate the fact that the buyer seldom pays the first price asked. (3) *Decir cuentos—Yo digo un cuento*.

Buying and selling pets, real or sketched, was a popular topic—by telephone and improvised in the shop. Three live dogs appeared, the pupils having arranged to have their parents wait outside to take the pets home after the sale. Also, there were a canary, a white mouse, baby chicks, some of which stayed in the counselor's office until the close of school. The group that bargained for the *pollitos* came in Spanish costumes.

For the telephone set-up, a French telephone and a desk phone were supplied by pupils. The desk phone on a table represented the shop or store, and the storekeeper seated there each time took orders, addresses and the like and answered questions about the merchandise and delivery. The French phone was placed on a chair in front of the class on the opposite side of the room, and when this pupil called a number aloud, the other pupil at the desk jingled a bell hidden in the desk drawer, took down the receiver and began the conversation. It was very effective, and the pupils were enthusiastic. One group ended their conversation by singing a round learned by the class and then led the class, as a whole, in the singing, giving commands in Spanish.

Telling stories included giving those already studied or original ideas of the pupils and developed as they wished. Class procedures went smoothly and fast because, when one of the three topics was announced by the teacher,

the pupils whose names appeared under it rose in turn and did their work before the group in rapid succession, without urging. Even the poorest pupils undertook difficult tasks, asking for a bit of help and practice together before the recitation began. They were permitted to stay outside the door ten minutes to rehearse together.

These diversified activities attempted to provide, in the teaching process, environments out of which communications grow, to replenish stimuli for ideas and to organize and arrange ideas for meaning and clarity, in situations and experiences understood and enjoyed by the pupil. They are convincing evidence that the teaching of foreign languages in the seventh and eighth grades can be a very valuable part of the child's development.

His interest, ability, response and skills demonstrate that his comprehension is satisfactory; his conversation and pronunciation skills are spontaneous and natural; he likes to write little stories, questions and answers; he enjoys acting and dramatizing his speech; he learns vocabulary with surprising speed and accurate imitation of sounds; not least of all, he is quick to appreciate, understand and even contribute to the cultural content of the language, correlating what he learns in his other classes with that presented in the Spanish class.

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"The Place of Foreign Languages in American Education" was the theme of the Foreign Language Conference sponsored recently by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the School of Education of New York University. Copies of the round table discussion, reported verbatim, may be obtained for 75 cents a copy by writing to Dr. Hymen Alpern, New York University, Washington Square, New York 3, New York.

Poetry in the Foreign Language Class

FOREIGN language teaching is a decidedly difficult task. It demands, in fact, the most resourceful teaching talent in our schools and colleges if success is to crown the effort. Imparting knowledge and skill, holding the interest and taxing the memory of the student body, not being able to appeal to an immediate practical purpose—what other subject must encounter such obstacles? Luckily, the foreign language teachers can boast of excellent textbooks; but these textbooks are excellent for the average teacher, good even for the mediocre and poor teacher. For the outstanding teacher, however, our excellent textbooks seem too time-table-like. But it does not matter; the good teacher rises always and easily above the textbook.

In spite of all their excellence, I have found, our textbooks for high schools and beginning college students (first and second year or semester) fall short above all in two ways: the teaching of vocabulary and of poems. I just wonder whether our colleagues in the English departments are not in the same predicament. Are their means of teaching vocabulary and poems adequate, satisfactory and comprehensive?

For years I have tried to develop a good way of vocabulary teaching, but as yet I have not found a satisfactory one. On the other hand, I am much more pleased with my method of teaching an understanding and an appreciation of poetry. Poems should be taught in all grades and classes of language study (native as well as foreign). But many teachers, especially young teachers, are afraid of taking up poems in class. Maybe they have never been taught to evaluate poetry or they have forgotten it. My aim in writing this article is to stimulate and inspire teachers and show them one way to handle poems in a foreign language class. There are, of course, many other ways. The one I am going to describe is not the only one, and I wish that old practitioners would come forth and tell us how they teach poems.

Besides general intelligence and knowledge of the subject matter, a teacher must have specific qualifications which make him or her a teacher; and for teachers who want to teach languages, certain requirements are absolute necessities. They must possess the proper voice, be good elocutionists and have a correct and clear pronunciation. They must be able to dramatize a given situation and not be afraid of "acting" or using gestures. Self-consciousness has no place in the classroom. We may, in that respect, endeavor to forget our inhibitions. Perhaps the students will snicker in the beginning when a teacher "acts" or dramatizes. But they will stop when they realize that the teacher is serious. Dramatic gestures and cries in the movies no longer cause students to snicker. They feel that such histrionics

belong to life, as a gospel from film land, and that is precisely the reason why Hollywood is making such impression upon young minds. Hollywood's great aim is to put on a "good show." Should not any teacher aim at that, too?

As far as *reading* poetry is concerned, there is just one advice to give: read the poems aloud to yourself or to a group so that everyone gets the musical sound effects.

When it comes to *studying* poetry, all of us should have had or should get instruction and experience so that we know what constitutes a good poem. It seems easy to tell the story or to describe the given picture(s). But a great poem has very much more than the story or a picture. It has form, mood, charm, feeling. It may express emotion, mystery and ideas. It often contains allegory or symbolism, which are difficult to explain and to interpret. It must reveal the soul of men and give a deeper understanding of life and the world and those spiritual forces which are beyond our ordinary comprehension.

He who can be made to see, hear and feel what the poet has to say will understand and *enjoy* poetry.

In order to understand poetry the teacher must first of all explain to the students certain technical devices with which the poet works. For that reason, let me give a short introduction into the subject of versification:

Metrical Form. Unless the poem is written in free verse—that is, no rhyme, lines of even or uneven lengths—or written in blank verse—that is, no rhyme, lines of even length, mostly ten syllables—we may distinguish two kinds of poems: poems divided into more or less uniform stanzas and poems divided irregularly or not at all, which is known in French versification as *vers libre*—that is, free rhythms, rhymed lines of uneven length, no stanzas. The stanza is a set pattern of lines. It may be uniform as in rhymed couplets or the lines may be of great variety, as long as they form a definite verse structure. A number of such structures are known under special names: sonnet, terza rima and the like. Looking at the form of the poem, students should answer questions like these: Is the poem written in stanzas or not? How many stanzas do you count? How many lines are in each stanza? Do the stanzas form a definite pattern? Has the poem a refrain?

Rhythm. German, as well as English, has accented and unaccented syllables which make up the rhythm of the poem. The lines in a poem usually follow a measure of accentuation, or they have a free accentuation. Without going into the system of poetic meters, one ought to ask questions like these: How many syllables and how many accents are in each line? Is the rhythm even? Does the rhythm vary in each line, in each stanza, or with the person speaking, or with a new idea expressed?

Rhyme. The last syllable(s) of a word in a line, inclusive of an accented vowel, must have the same spelling (*Augenreim*) or the same pronunciation

(*Ohrenreim*) or both. Lines which end in an accented syllable have masculine rhyme, while those ending in an unaccented syllable are said to have feminine rhyme. Occasionally the reader may observe internal rhyme (*Innenreim*) within the line. Questions which should be asked about the rhyme: Is the rhyme for the ear or for eye or for both? Has the poem a distinct rhyme schedule? What are the outstanding rhymes? Which is used more: masculine or feminine rhymes? Do you find any incorrect rhymes?

Musical Sound Effects. The poets employ many of them. What sound effects have been used and how and why? Teachers and students should watch:

(1) the use of consonants and consonant clusters. We have alliteration when the same consonant (rarely a vowel) starts two or more accented syllables.

(2) The use of vowels and diphthongs. We have assonance when in close succession the same vowel occurs in accented syllables.

(3) any definite musical elements. As we have in music major and minor keys, consonants and vowels may produce a softness and a hardness in the tone of the poem. Another musical comparison relates to the pitch. Do the vowels range in a high or a low pitch?

(4) the tempo. Are most of the syllables long or short? Do they imitate speed or slowness?

(5) the device of repetition. Are the same words, phrases, sentences or lines repeated in the poem?

Language and Style. The students must be taught to observe many details dealing with:

(1) the individual words and to ask: How is the diction? Are the words poetic, prosaic, to the point, fitting the occasion or not, simple, complicated, unusual? Do the words express motion or a static condition?

(2) the syntax and to ask: What is the sentence structure? Does the poet use ordinary word order, or does he force the word order into a rhythm? Does the poet use many interjections or sentences with missing grammatical parts—for example, subjects, predicates and the like? In what proportion does the poet use main clauses and dependent clauses?

(3) the style and to ask: Does the poet coin new words or compound words in order to bring out a specific or a new meaning? Is there an enhancement in the choice of the words? Does one see any stylistic devices such as antithesis, comparison or metaphor? Does the poet use any figures of speech, and is it possible to discover a trend or tendency? Does the poem contain any unreal or supernatural elements? Does the poet personify an object or a thing?

The students must be told where to find the poems which they are to read. Indicate the anthology if it is not in the textbook, or give them copies of the poem. But make the students copy the poems in a special poetry book. For that reason, it is best to begin with short poems. Of course, you

must select poems fitting the age group you are teaching. However, do not be too easy. Rather aim a little too high than too low. It is my custom to demand from my college students that they familiarize themselves with certain facts of the poet's life. As hints for biographical data, I recommend the following points: (a) full name, (b) when and where born, (c) status of life of parents, (d) education of the poet, (e) civil profession of the poet, (f) success in life, (g) success as a poet, (h) love(s) and family life, (i) life's span and death (date), (j) main works, (k) other important events in the life of the poet. Information may be gathered from histories of literature or encyclopedias.¹

After having copied the poems the students should translate them into writing. While not an advocate of the old translation method, I believe that an accurate rendering of the poem in the native tongue is absolutely essential. Students should be encouraged to try a poetic translation either in rhythmic prose or even in rhymes.

The next step is the most difficult part for the teacher. It is nothing less than working out a "web" (*Netzwerk*) of questions with which to cover the entire poem.

These questions must be grouped in a somewhat consistent way and should start with questions about the versification, the language and the style of the poem as indicated previously.

The next group of questions should aim at the immediate contents of the individual stanzas. They should ask if, necessary, for definite information about mythology, history, geography and the life, which the students should look up in books of references.

A third group of questions must deal with the purpose of the poem: Why did the poet write it? At what is the poet aiming? Ask whether the students can discover allegorical allusions or symbolic meanings, and do not be discouraged if they cannot. Perhaps the teacher himself will have to read commentaries before he can understand the poem fully.

As an example, consider the following poem, which the students copy in their poetry books or notes:

Die Rache

—Ludwig Uhland

Der Knecht hat erstochen den edeln Herrn,
Der Knecht wär' selber ein Ritter gern.

Er hat ihn erstochen im dunkeln Hain
Und den Leib versenket im tiefen Rhein.

Hat angeleget die Rüstung blank,
Auf des Herren Roß sich geschwungen frank.

¹ Good brief biographies of German poets can be found in *A Book of German Lyrics*, edited by Friedrich Bruns and published by D. C. Heath and Company or in *German Lyrics and Ballads*, edited by Vos and Barba and published by Henry Holt and Company.

Und als er sprengen will über die Brück',
 Da stutzet das Roß und bäumt sich zurück.
 Und als er die güldnen Sporen ihm gab,
 Da schleudert's ihn wild in den Strom hinab.
 Mit Arm, mit Fuß er rudert und ringt,
 Der schwere Panzer ihn niederzwingt.

This poem with a written translation made at home is read aloud in class by teacher and students, and various translations are compared until an acceptable one is agreed upon. No special effort should be made to explain the contents of the poem.

The servant has stabbed the noble lord,
 The servant wanted to be a knight himself.
 He stabbed him in a dark grove
 And flung the body into the deep Rhine river.
 He put on the shining armor
 And gaily mounted the master's horse.
 But when he wanted to gallop across the bridge
 The horse rebelled and pranced back.
 And when he struck it with the golden spurs
 It threw him wildly into the stream.
 With his arms and feet he rowed and wrestled,
 The heavy armor, however, forced him down.

After the best possible translation has been agreed upon, the students receive copies of the following questions in English or in the specific foreign language which they study. These questions must be answered as a written home assignment.

1. Did the poet write the poem in free rhythms, or did he divide it in stanzas? 2. How many stanzas has the poem? 3. How many lines does each stanza contain? 4. How many accents can you count in each line? 5. Is the rhythm even, or does it vary in certain lines? 6. How is the variation brought about? 7. How is the rhyme schedule of the poem? 8. Can you discover any outstanding rhymes? 9. Are masculine or feminine rhymes used? 10. Does Uhland employ alliteration for sound effect? 11. Can you see any other semi-alliterative use of consonants or consonant clusters? 12. Does Uhland employ vowels or diphthongs for musical effects? 13. What can one say about the musical quality of the poem? 14. Is the tempo fast or slow or medium fast? 15. What can be said about repetition of words? 16. What is the choice of words? 17. Do the verbs express a static condition or do they express motion? 18. Would a preponderance of verbs of motion indicate that the poem is more of a story or of a picture? 19. What is the sentence structure, and does the poet use many dependent clauses? 20. Can you find lines where the poet deviates from the ordinary word order? If so, why was such change made? 21. Does Uhland use ordinary stylistic devices such as comparisons, metaphors and figures of speech? 22. Has the poem

any supernatural elements? 23. What is the title of the poem and does it suggest anything? 24. Of whom do we hear in the first stanza? 25. How does the first stanza strike you? 26. Why did the servant commit the crime? 27. Is the ambition of the servant understandable? 28. Where did the servant murder his master and what did he do with the body? 29. What is the *Rhein* and why this exact name? 30. What does the third stanza tell us of the servant? 31. What does the horse do? 32. Why does the horse rebel? 33. How does the poet treat the horse? 34. How does the servant try to handle the horse? 35. What does the use of the spurs indicate as to the servant's character? 36. What is the effect of the spurs? 37. What is the last scene or picture we have in the poem? 38. Has the poem a moral, and what commonplace view could you express about this poem? 39. But the poem has broader meaning—what does the dead lord personify? 40. In this poem as well as in life generally: how is the noble element usually killed or hurt? 41. In what way does the servant want to become a knight? 42. What does the servant want to pretend? 43. Criminals and imposters ought to be brought to justice, but if man cannot do it, who or what agency frequently metes out justice? 44. What do we call such justice meted out on earth? 45. What instrument is used in this poem to bring retributive justice into the world? 46. In what way does the poet show that the divine order of the universe (*die göttliche Weltordnung*) cannot be upset?

When the teacher takes up the questions and the answers to them in class, he or she will find that many students have missed the point in a number of questions, because they have not learned to observe and cannot follow the lines of thought as expressed in the poem. But with a little patience and helpful instruction the students will be able to understand the drift of the questions and get closer to the poem. In order to make clear what I have in mind, I am giving the answers to the previous questions.

1. The poem is divided in stanzas. 2. It has six stanzas. 3. Each stanza has two lines. 4. Each line has four accents. 5. The rhythm in the different lines is not even. 6. Certain lines have a larger number of unaccented syllables, and the unaccented syllables differ in position. 7. The rhyme schedule is simple and even. 8. There are no outstanding rhymes. 9. Only masculine rhymes are used. 10. Alliteration is effectively used: *Rüstung—Roß, Brück'—bäumt, gilden—gab, rudert—ringt*. 11. Other sound effects which resemble alliteration are the *ch*-sound in: *Knecht—erstochen*, the *sch*-sound in: *sprenge—stulzet*, the *z*-sound in: *Panzer—niederzwingt*. 12. Vowels and diphthongs are used only to a limited degree for musical effects. There is the *e* in the first stanza, the *ü* in the fourth stanza and the *u* in the last stanza, which might be intended as assonance. 13. The consonants bring out a certain harshness, while the vowels avoiding a high pitch tend towards a minor key. 14. The tempo moves at a slow average speed. 15. Repetition is used extensively, and we have: *Knecht—Knecht, erstochen—erstochen, Und als—Und als, Da—Da, Mit—mit*. 16. The words are rather simple, except for certain technical terms such as: *Rüstung, stulzet, bäumt, Sporen, Panzer*. 17. The verbs express motion. 18. The poem is the story of an event. 19. The sentence structure seems occasionally abrupt, which might be explained by the fact that the poem has only two dependent clauses. 20. The poet deviates quite often from the ordinary word order. In ordinary prose we would say: (a) *in den tiefen Rhein versenkt*, (b) *hat die blanke Rüstung angelegt*,

(c) *auf des Herrn Roß sich frank geschwungen*, (d) *über die Brücke sprengen will*, (e) *stutzt*, (f) *mit Armen und Füßen rudert und ringt er*. Uhland changed the word order in order to get the proper rhythm and rhyme but also to imitate a naive and primitive way of writing poems as found in the German folksongs. 21. No special stylistic devices are used, unless the words *rudert und ringt* are figures of speech taken from boating and wrestling. 22. There are no supernatural elements openly expressed in the poem. 23. The title is "The Revenge" and it suggests a previous wrong and arouses immediate interest in the reader. 24. The poet tells of a servant who has killed his master, a noble lord. 25. The first line is very much to the point and informative. 26. The servant wants to be a knight himself. 27. Yes. To reach for something higher and better is not wrong provided it is done in a legitimate way. 28. The servant killed the master in a dark grove and threw the body into the Rhine. 29. The Rhine river is the main river of Germany, and by using the exact name Uhland gives the poem local color. 30. The servant puts on the armor and mounts the horse. 31. The horse, however, rebels. 32. The horse feels that the real master is not riding on its back. 33. The poet gives the horse feeling, understanding, judgment and a will, which is not caused by reason but by instinct. The horse is not an animal from fairy land. 34. The servant starts using the spurs on the horse. 35. The servant can only use force if he wants to obtain something. He murdered the master and wants to force the animal to obey. 36. The effect is just the opposite: the horse throws the rider into the stream. 37. The servant tries to swim ashore, but he is pulled down by the heavy armor. 38. Yes, one might construe a moral: crime does not pay. 39. The dead lord personifies the noble element of mankind, because *edelin* may mean noble in a social as well as in an ethical sense. 40. The noble element is usually killed by wickedness, crime and treason and is rarely killed in open battle. 41. The servant wants to become a knight through a cowardly act, not by merit. 42. The servant wants to pretend that he is a knight. 43. God or destiny may mete out justice. 44. Justice meted out on earth is called retributive justice. 45. The horse of the slain knight is the instrument of bringing justice into the world. 46. We sometimes think that murderers and thieves and blackmailers may get away with their evil deeds. But too often they do not enjoy the fruits of their acts very long. They have disturbed the balance of divine order of the universe and must pay the price to restore it.

Nobody should be amazed at the large number of questions which I indicated in my article. That was done on purpose. As soon as the students have become familiar with the details of versification, the questions about form, language and style may be reduced, bunched or simplified; and most of the attention may be given to the questions concerning content of the poem.

Looking at poems with critical eyes is a technique which can be learned to a considerable degree; and when acquired, teachers and students will approach poetry with a feeling of confidence, mastery and expectation²⁸ of pleasure and enjoyment.

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Teaching French Pronunciation to Beginners

EVERY foreign language teacher learns sooner or later that most college students take a foreign language primarily because it is required for graduation. Some of these students elect Spanish or even German in preference to French for allegedly professional reasons (for example, Spanish for commerce, German for medicine), but in many cases their choice is a purely negative one—they avoid French because they have been advised by their peers that although French looks deceptively easy on the printed page it is virtually unpronounceable. This unenviable reputation, largely due to impractical (if conscientious) teaching methods, does not beseem a language noted for its clarity and precision of sound and sense. Yet many a baffled beginner, demoralized by a prolonged and fruitless exposition of the apparently esoteric phonetic system and chaotic orthography of French, is led to caution his friends to eschew the offending language at all costs.

It is bad psychology on the part of the teacher to erect such a forbidding façade, which might well bear the inscription *Lasciate ogni speranza, voi che 'ntrate*. The gain in accuracy of articulation (if any) that professorial perfectionism may effect is more than offset by the defeatism that quickly grips the average pedestrian student, whose acquaintance with French is apt to be limited to two or three years even if he survives the initial shock.

There is an even more cogent reason for setting up narrower phonetic objectives at the beginning of a college course in French. However undesirable such a late start may be, almost all Americans begin the study of French at an age when their organs of speech have all but lost their flexibility. As a result mere imitation (the "natural" method) is ineffectual. Perfection of articulation is perforce a matter of slow, gradual, conscious adaptation. No amount of grim determination and grinding drill can produce faultless pronunciation within the first few weeks or months of a course.

It is futile to worry that students will speak French with an American accent if they do not exchange their native articulation for a completely new and foreign one from the very beginning—they will in any event. Under patient, skilful tutelage, however, the rare student gifted with a sensitive ear can and will gradually refine his phonemes through the years. As for the large majority—the word "impossible" is French.

The object of this article is to demonstrate that a workable provisional

pronunciation of French can be attained in about one hour of classroom time. Is this a mere gasconade? Can college freshmen learn the thirty-seven sounds of French in so short a time? Obviously not. The question is how many purely French sounds the beginner needs to learn at the very start in order to handle connected discourse in French. With all due respect for the nice distinctions between French and English occlusives, for example, it may be argued that the beginner is confronted with no more than three utterly new phonemes: the vowel [y], the semiconsonant [ɥ]—a derivative of [y]—and the consonant [ʀ].¹ For the rest, the student can draw on his unconsciously acquired stock of English (that is, American) sounds *mutatis mutandis*.

To cut a path through the thicket of English and French orthographical eccentricities the student must learn the international phonetic alphabet, which has long since ceased to require an apology. In other words, the phonetic alphabet, of which the reputed difficulty has been grossly exaggerated, serves as an intermediary between the unconsciously acquired English (that is, American) phonemes (to be controlled by easily remembered key words) and the spelling of their French counterparts.²

Without being technical the teacher should emphasize at the outset that French is an energetic, precisely articulated language and invite the class to observe his vigorous lip movement. Once this easily observable point is understood, the study of the individual sounds may begin.

The eight pure oral vowels form a symmetrical group—a kind of phonetic octave—that fall into line readily. A series of eight English words, all of which begin and end with the same consonant (in order to minimize distraction), enclose as it were the raw vowel sounds.

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) <i>beet</i> [i] | (5) <i>bot</i> [ɑ] |
| (2) <i>bait</i> [e] | (6) <i>bought</i> [ɔ] |
| (3) <i>bet</i> [ɛ] | (7) <i>boat</i> [o] |
| (4) <i>bat</i> [a] | (8) <i>boot</i> [u] |

Obviously some modifications must be made even at the start, but they can be indicated in simple, nontechnical language: (1) and (8) more tense, (2) and (7) without glide, (3) more open, (6) more rounded and (4) closer.³

Before proceeding to a reference list of French spellings corresponding to the eight phonetic symbols it is important to give a brief explanation of French syllabication. One simple rule is adequate: French syllables end

¹ Of course English *r* is pronounced in a variety of ways, but the lingual and uvular *r*'s are not American.

² It is necessary to assume that the student's American English is reasonably sound, especially as regards such words as *but* and *put*.

³ A good key word for French [a] is *madame*. The teacher can point out that the French vowel is about midway between American [æ] and [a].

in a vowel unless a difficult combination of consonants would result. Examples: *a-mi*, *es-prit*. French stress may also be boiled down to a simple rule: the last pronounced syllable of a word or group of words is slightly stronger than the rest.

The spellings can be confined to those which actually occur in the elementary grammar and reader; it is of no advantage to mention the numerous exceptions and special cases at this stage.

[i]: <i>i</i>	[a]: <i>â</i>
[e]: <i>ê</i>	<i>a</i> + final silent <i>s</i>
<i>e</i> + final silent consonant except <i>t</i>	<i>a</i> + [z]
[ɛ]: <i>è</i>	[ɔ]: <i>o</i> generally
<i>ê</i>	[o]: <i>ô</i>
<i>e</i> + final silent <i>t</i>	<i>o</i> when final sound
<i>e</i> + two consonants	<i>o</i> + [z]
<i>ai</i> generally	<i>au</i>
<i>ei</i>	<i>eau</i>
[a]: <i>a</i> generally ⁴	[u]: <i>ou</i> ⁵

Whenever possible, words that repeat the vowel sound under study and have single consonants should be used for drill. For example: *ici*, *été*, *aimait*, *madame*, *bas*, *monotone*, *auto*, *joujou*.

The "French *u*" [y] presents the only serious obstacle to a provisional pronunciation of French. With a little practice, however, the beginner can learn to articulate [i] while pouting firmly. While the sound [ø] may be produced by pronouncing [e] with a mild pout, it may also be extracted from English *put*. The other two vowels in this group can be borrowed from English *but*: *but* provides a satisfactory equivalent of French [œ] and the first syllable of *belligerent* illustrates the French neutral vowel [ə].

Very few spellings are needed here.

[y]: <i>u</i>	[œ]: <i>eu</i> generally
[ø]: <i>eu</i> when final sound	<i>oe(u)</i>
	[ə] <i>e</i> at the end of syllables especially in difficult consonantal combinations ⁶

Examples for drill: *vue*, *feu*, *seul*, *le* and *petit*.

Nasality in English and French vowels is more a matter of quantity than

⁴ Note also that *oi* is usually pronounced [wa] as in *moi* but [wa] in *bois*, *droit*, *mois*, *trois* (for future reference).

⁵ The first 699 items of the Tharp *Basic French Vocabulary* include the following exceptions: *es*[e] and *el*[e], *femme* [fam], (*j'*)*ai* [e], *vais-sais-sait* with [e] usually, *faisant* and so forth [fəzā], *bras*, (*tu*) *as-vas* with [a], *gagner* with [a], *mauvais* and *aur-saur-* with [ɔ], *y=ii* in *ayant* and so forth, and *pays* [pe/ei]. These exceptions may be dealt with as they occur. It would be helpful to mark these words with an asterisk upon their first occurrence.

⁶ Add to exceptions for reference: *eu* and so forth [y] and *monsieur* [mɔsjø].

quality. The four French nasal vowels can be developed from a series of four English words by the simple device of "chopping off" their final nasal consonant while thinking it intensely—thus: *fan* [ɛ̃], *fawn* [ɑ̃], *phone* [ɔ̃], *fun* [œ̃].

Before listing the common French spellings of these vowels the teacher should mention again the principle of syllabication, emphasizing that the nasal consonant (*n* or *m*) following the vowel must be in the same syllable in order to exert its effect (cf. *fin-fini*) and that double consonants usually count as one. Only a few spellings will suffice.

[ɛ̃]: *in, ain*⁷

[ɑ̃]: *an, en*

[ɔ̃]: *on*

[œ̃]: *un*

Two of the semiconsonants, those found in English *yell* and *well* [j] and [w], concern spelling alone, while the single difficult semiconsonant [ɥ] depends on the status of the student's [y] and cannot be expected to ring true at first. The semiconsonants may be considered compressed high vowels and approached through their vocal counterparts—thus: [pi-e], [u-i], and [ly-i] by compression become [pje], [wi], and [liɥ].⁸

The English consonants, with the exception of *r*, can serve in elementary French. Unless the teacher affects the uvular *r* [R], it is hardly necessary to mention it. In any case, the student can imitate the ringing of a bell and then learn to control the length of the lingual or vibrant *r* [r] thus induced.

All but three of the phonetic symbols representing consonant sounds are obvious. The following pairs of words provide a shortcut to the use of the three mystic symbols: [ʃ] as in English *SH*ow or French *CH*aud, [ʒ] as in English and French *rouGe*, [ɲ] as in English *compaNI*on or French *compaGN*on (but fused in French).

Some of the vagaries of French consonant letters may be set forth in a chart which is purely for reference.

<i>s</i> intervocalic:	[z] <i>ch</i> ose	
<i>s</i> otherwise:	[s] } <i>si</i>	
<i>c</i> + <i>e, i</i> :	[s] } <i>ceci</i>	<i>qu</i> + <i>e, i</i> : [k] <i>qui</i>
<i>c</i> otherwise:	[k] <i>cas</i>	<i>ç</i> + <i>a, o, u</i> : [s] <i>français</i>
<i>j</i> always:	[ʒ] } <i>je</i>	
<i>g</i> + <i>e, i</i> :	[ʒ] } <i>gens</i>	<i>gu</i> + <i>e, i</i> : [g] <i>guide</i>
<i>g</i> otherwise:	[g] <i>gant</i>	<i>ge</i> + <i>a, o, u</i> : [ʒ] <i>mangeons</i>

Silent letters are not a new experience to those who read English. A few observations about the silent letters of French will keep the beginner out of trouble. Final *e* is silent in French as in English except in monosyllables

⁷ Note also that *ien* is pronounced [jɛ̃] and *oin* is pronounced [wɛ̃] as in *bien* and *loin*.

⁸ Note also that [j] is often spelled *il* or *ill* after a vowel except *il* after *i* (*travail, ailleurs, fille*). Exceptions: *mille, ville*.

that have no other vowel. The time-honored generalization that final consonants are usually silent in French with the exception of those contained in the English word *CaReFuL* is still helpful. No reference need be made to aspirate *h* at this state; it is enough to say that *h* is always silent.⁹

Elision and liaison are simple in principle. Just as nature abhors a vacuum French abhors hiatus. Consonant and vowel sounds tend to alternate. The advantage of *j'ai* over *je ai* and of *les amis* over *les/amis* is manifest.

With this admittedly rough working basis the beginner is ready to make new associations of sight and sound. The exceptions and fine distinctions can be taken up as occasion demands. Little by little the rough jewel is ground and polished.

Hâtez-vous lentement; et, sans perdre courage,
Vingt fois sur le métier remettez votre ouvrage;
Polissez-le sans cesse et le repolissez . . .

Any temporary sacrifice of accuracy is more than compensated for by the reduction of the façade of pronunciation difficulty to a minimum. The beginner emerges from his first encounter with French in a reasonably confident and hopeful frame of mind. No longer does the prospect of knowing French culture in its pure state seem chimerical. Banished is the misconception that learning to pronounce French is like learning to speak algebra.

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⁹ The rules given for the consonants cover the pronunciation of most of the consonants that appear in the first 699 items of the Tharp list. All the exceptions can be dealt with as they occur. Five numerals are involved: *cinq*, *six*, *sept*, *huit*, *dix*. Final *t* is pronounced in *cel*. Final *c* is silent in *blanc* and sometimes in *donc*. Final *s* is pronounced in *fil*s and *sens*, sometimes in *tandis*. In *compte*, *corps*, *temps*, and *vingt*, we have to do with silent etymological *p* and *g*. Intervocalic *c* is voiced in *second*. The ending *-tion* is pronounced [sjɔ̃] except in *question*.

An International Language—When?

"The whole world will surely have a common language, that is quite elementarily Utopian . . ." (H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*, I, p. 5.)

LET it be said at the outset that an international language would be a boon to mankind, that it is feasible and possible of realization—on certain conditions. Even the most violent and outspoken adversaries of all interlinguistic schemes have conceded the value of an interlanguage, and their criticisms have been primarily directed against one or the other attempt at propagating some particular tongue. There are four basic plans for adoption of an international language: (1) an *a priori* philosophical language which has no vocabulary and grammar in the conventional sense, but which relies on abstract written or audible signs, based on a philosophical classification of all things and acts with which the human mind wishes and needs to concern itself; (2) the revival of a "dead" language, mainly Latin or Greek, probably modified; (3) a constructed language, like Volapük, Esperanto, Ido, Novial and scores of others; or (4) the extension of a current language, modified or unmodified, over the greater part of the world.

A plan for a philosophical language was offered as early as the seventeenth century by Francis Bacon who suggested the adoption of "real characters"⁷ comparable to Chinese ideograms (China was just being "discovered" then), which would be independent of any pronunciation. This was to be, naturally, an auxiliary "language," not to be spoken at all, employed only in highly learned endeavors and not in *belles lettres* or in commerce. Such an enterprise would have little to recommend itself for practical purposes and would nowadays scarcely be grouped among international languages. But several other attempts in the same direction followed Bacon's. The names of John Wilkins,¹ Francis Lodwick,² Thomas Urquhart,³ Cave Beck,⁴ Dalgarno⁵ and many others down to our own cen-

¹ *Mercury, or the Secret and Swift Messenger*, 1641. A chapter in this work bears the ambitious title: "Concerning an Universall Character, that may be legible to all nations and languages."

² *A common Writing: whereby two, although not understanding one the other's language, yet by the helpe thereof may communicate their minds to one another, composed by a Well-Willer to Learning*, 1647. Later this was expanded into: *The Ground work, or Foundation laid for the Framing of a New Perfect Language: and an Universall or Common Writing, and presented to the consideration of the Learned by a Well-Willer to Learning*, 1652.

³ *Logopandecticon, or an Introduction to the universal Language*, 1653. This is, no doubt, a satire (although by some taken at its face-value) which makes fun of the author's predecessors. Suggested are eleven cases, eleven genders, four numbers, eleven tenses, seven moods and

ture might be mentioned. Not to be omitted are various suggestions for numerical languages, in which numbers take the place of words by means of an internationally accepted code⁶ and, last but not least, a very ingenious scheme of communication based on musical notes by the Frenchman Jean-François Sudre (1817). All these philosophical systems—including those, or rather, especially those which were devised also for oral use—suffer from an insuperable impracticability. Leaving the phonetic aspect aside—beauty not being a necessary criterion of an international language—mastery of those tongues would require a prodigious memory to retain the immense number of classes and subclasses and divisions and subdivisions into which the visible and invisible world is divided—a difficulty which might discourage even philosophers, for whom such languages were primarily designed in any event. Hence philosophical languages perhaps failed to solve the problem mostly because they were too ambitious. Leibnitz and Descartes also were greatly interested in the universal language, and the latter noted in a letter to Father Mersenne in regard to the philosophical language:

*"Or je tiens que cette langue est possible, et qu'on peut trouver la science de qui elle dépend, par le moyen de laquelle les paysans pourraient mieux juger de la vérité des choses, que ne font maintenant les philosophes. Mais n'espérez pas de la voir jamais en usage; cela présuppose de grands changements en l'ordre des choses, et il faudrait que tout le Monde ne fût qu'un paradis terrestre, ce qui n'est bon à proposer que dans le pays de romans."*⁷

I have dwelt purposely on this part of the history of the international language movement⁸ at some length. It was my intention to indicate how, from the very inception in modern times of this great and humanitarian idea, its advocates let themselves be misled into indulging in too large and

also a provision that the words retain the same meaning no matter what the order of the letters.

⁴ *The universal character, by which all the nations of the world may understand one another's conceptions, Reading out of one common writing their own Mother Tongues; an Invention of general Use, the practice whereof may be attained in two hours space, observing the grammatical Directions; which Character is so contrived, that it may be spoken as well as written, 1657.* Note that the inventor makes provisions for oral use of his language. "Honor thy father and thy mother" is written: *leb2314 p2477 pf2477* and pronounced: *lebloreonfo peelosensens piflofossensens*. (See Wiener, Leo, "Universal Languages, II," *Boston Transcript*, February 23, 1907.)

⁵ *Ars signorum, vulgo Character Universalis et Lingua Philosophica, 1661.*

⁶ Comparable perhaps to the Dewey Decimal System of cataloguing and shelving books in libraries, an invention which, of course, never claimed to be or to become a language.

⁷ Lettre à Mersenne, Amsterdam, 20 novembre 1629. See Adam, Ch. and Milhaud, G., *Descartes, Correspondance*, tome I, lettre 22, pp. 89-93. Paris, 1936.

⁸ For a complete history see: Couturat, L. and Leau, L., *Histoire de la langue universelle*. Paris, 1903. Guérard, Albert L., *A Short History of the International Language Movement*. New York, 1921.

too revolutionary and too ambitious schemes. As Descartes recognized, they were schemes for which the world was not ready. We shall see later how even in our days the inventors and propagators of interlinguistic systems demand more from their proselytes than most of them are able and willing to give. We shall see, moreover, how they expect more from their creation in the way of bettering the world and its inhabitants than a mere international language is able to accomplish.

Another plan considers the revival of Latin or Greek. (Any other language is altogether out of the question in a world whose principal civilizations are, willy nilly, mainly based on Helleno-Roman antiquity.) This plan has found but few supporters, and even an entirely remodeled and modernized Latin,⁹ making provisions for an adequately increased vocabulary, has not been able to arouse great enthusiasm anywhere. The general feeling seems to be that what has "died" had better be left dead and that resurrection cannot quite dispel the musty odor of the grave. "*On y sent un retour en arrière*," as Michel Bréal put it.¹⁰

The third project envisages the construction of a new language which is to be imposed, by force or persuasion or otherwise, on everyone. There is no dearth of constructed languages—in fact a frequently voiced objection against adopting one has been that there are too many of them. A great number are the products of well-meaning, but more enthusiastic than intelligent, dilettantes, who by their endeavors, sometimes bordering on lunacy and betraying a Messiah-complex, have led the subject into ill repute. But indiscriminately severe judgment is unjustified, and trained linguists do not usually indulge in a waste of scorn against the worst, or let themselves be prejudiced by professional jealousy against the best of the amateurs. Unfortunately, the ordinary seeker of the truth will be confused and deterred by this prolixity; yet it is exactly this bewildered ordinary man whom the apostles are most eager to convert. But, naturally, all this contains no cogent reason for condemning all international languages and abandoning the plan entirely. It should not be too difficult to make a choice among the various possibilities once we have decided that we want to adopt a constructed international language and have laid down a canon of desirable and necessary qualities. Such a statement of principles is contained in a paper signed by no lesser authorities than Sapir, Bloomfield, Boas, Gerig and Krapp.¹¹ With this blueprint in hand, a well-nigh perfect instrument of

⁹ On the order of Peano's *Latino sine flexione* (1903), for example.

¹⁰ Bréal, Michel, "Le choix d'une langue internationale," *La Revue de Paris*, 15 juillet 1901, p. 230 ff.

¹¹ "Memorandum on the Problem of an International Auxiliary Language," *Romanic Review*, XVI (1925), pp. 244-256. Most important are the *General Principles*, including ease of pronunciation for speakers of all tongues, simplicity of grammar, ease of unambiguous translation, flexible structure with optional use of some grammatical features, easily comprehensible

interlinguistic communication could be devised—perfect, that is, to those who attribute possible perfection to this plan. As we shall see, anything but unanimity reigns on this basic point.

And finally there remains the last plan—the one contemplating extension, by some means, of the validity of a now spoken tongue so as to make it something of a *lingua franca* of world communication. There are now several *linguae francae* extending over limited but comparatively wide areas. Among the most important are English, Pidgin English, Arabic, Yiddish, Latin. Judging by the trend of historical and political events of the past centuries, English has a fair chance of becoming the greatest *lingua franca* of the modern world. So much has been admitted even in quarters where charity towards things British traditionally has not been encouraged.¹² Statistically this trend has been exposed by the English statistician Lewis Carnac in the following table.¹³

	Speakers in millions					
	English	German	Russian	French	Italian	Spanish
End of 15th century	4	10	3	10	9½	8½
End of 16th century	6	10	3	14	9½	8½
End of 17th century	8½	10	3	20	9½	8½
End of 18th century	20	31	30	31	15	26
End of 19th century	116	80	85	52	54	44
End of 20th century	640	210	233	85	77	74

For past centuries, this chart shows nothing more than an estimate, correct figures being hardly obtainable; whereas the future, the end of the twentieth century, offers only a very hypothetical prognostic view and a very strongly optimistic and flattering one for all languages concerned. For in it there is assumed, without the slightest foundation in fact or even expectation, a rate of arithmetical progression continuing at the rate prevailing in the nineteenth century—that is, at the time of imperialistic expansion of nearly all European powers and languages. Granting that we might still be living in an imperialistic age, it can hardly be assumed that future campaigns also will drop their bounty in the laps of so many nations with comforting impartiality. This chart, then, is useful only in indicating a general trend.

The argument between the promoters of a spoken language and the

vocabulary built mainly of the materials familiar to speakers of western European languages, incorporation of the results of the logical developments of linguistic trends, possibility of developing a shorthand system and phonetic intelligibility on the telephone, radio and phonograph.

¹² Diels, Hermann, "Leibniz und das Problem der Universalsprache," *Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1899, pp. 589–599.

¹³ *Umschau*, V. (August, 1899), p. 632.

champions of a constructed language has been raging all through the history of the international language movement. Many linguists have maintained that an artificial language is a contradiction in terms, that a language must grow organically like any product of nature, that it must be free to change—as an international language undoubtedly would, too (they say), in various ways in different parts of the world, thus splitting up into mutually more or less unintelligible dialects¹⁴—and that, in any case, a language could not be created with any prospect of permanency even in a dialectized form; it would wilt away, another Homunculus.¹⁵ At least one Esperantist, however, adopts the argument of the organic growth and life of language to prove, not that Esperanto is not realizable but that it must be satisfied with its position as “*langue internationale juxtaposée, et non substituée aux langues nationales*.”¹⁶ Then there are linguists who contend that the difference between artificial and natural, as terms applied to language, is one of degree rather than of kind¹⁷ or even that, far from being a contradiction in terms, artificial language is a tautology since all languages are man-made—that is, artificial.¹⁸ If we were to pursue these arguments, we should surely find ourselves involved in the controversy on the origin of language itself: *φύσει* or *θεσει*, God-given or man-made, with consequences that go far beyond the scope of this paper and, to be sure, the scope of the international language movement itself.¹⁹ And finally there is, among a few philologists, sometimes plain resentment that amateurs should usurp the prerogatives of the professional linguist.²⁰

¹⁴ Brugmann, Karl, “Zur Frage der Einführung einer künstlichen Hilfssprache,” *Indogermanische Forschungen*, XXII (1908), p. 387. The logical objection against this view is that due to the excellent communication, written and acoustic, of our days the danger of dialectization is small. Only a complete disruption of communications, caused by “total” war, would have a definitely damaging effect. And in such a monstrous calamity subsequent formation of dialects would indeed be a negligible phenomenon. See: Pei, Mario A., “One World? One Language?” *Modern Language Journal*, XXXI (1947), p. 13. Schuchardt, Hugo, *Auf Anlass des Volapük* (Berlin, 1888), pp. 6–7.

¹⁵ Meyer, Gustav, *Essays und Studien zur Sprachgeschichte und Volkskunde* (Strassburg, 1893), II, pp. 34–35; Brugmann, Karl, “Zur Frage . . .,” p. 371 f.; Diels, Hermann, *Internationale Aufgaben der Universität*, Rede zur Gedächtnisfeier des Stifters der Berliner Universität König Friedrich Wilhelm III, in der Aula am 3. August 1906 gehalten (Berlin, 1906), p. 30 f.; Dauzat, Albert, *L'Europe linguistique* (Paris, 1940), pp. 254–255.

¹⁶ Moch, Gaston, “La question de la langue internationale et sa solution par l'Esperanto,” *Revue internationale de Sociologie*, V (1897), p. 256.

¹⁷ Jespersen, Otto, “Nature and Art in Language,” *American Speech*, V (1929), p. 89.

¹⁸ Schuchardt, Hugo, *Auf Anlass . . .*, p. 10.

¹⁹ See Diels, Hermann, *Internationale Aufgaben . . .*, p. 22 ff.

²⁰ Particularly if the protagonists are a Warsaw Jewish physician and a Prussian university professor: “Woher dem Dr. Zamenhof die Berechtigung kommt, von den Deutschen zu verlangen, sich seinen Einfällen anzubequemen, möchte ich erst nachgewiesen haben . . .” “Immer der gleiche Refrain, die Esperantisten und ihre Häuptlinge können tun, was sie wollen, wir ändern armen Menschenkinder müssen . . .” Leskien, August, “Zur Frage der Einführung einer künstlichen Hilfssprache,” *Indogermanische Forschungen*, XXII (1908), pp. 390, 394.

Those who favored the international acceptance of a living natural language found themselves immediately attacked for furthering nationalistic aims of their respective countries. It is almost impossible to draw any battle lines here—one is treated to a fight of everyone against everyone. Any propagator of his native (or any other) tongue may have been, but was not necessarily, guilty of imperialism or, at least, misguided patriotism. By the same token any one of his opponents might have been a true internationalist who wished to forestall one nation's undue preponderance, or he too might have been simply a jealous chauvinist who scented danger for the projected or current expansion or preservation of his own language—that is, nation. Internal and external politics based on linguistic diplomacy is nothing new.²¹ The sentiments, and the terms in which they are expressed in this controversy, are of a fascinating variety: surprise, anger, scorn, fear, hatred, arrogance, indignation, they run the gamut of emotions of the *homo politicus*, reminiscent of the squabbles of “wardheelers,” disguised as discussions for the good of mankind. A sorry spectacle, but not one which must militate against international languages, just as the course of politics in its lower form must not militate against representative government.

The fear that the nation, or nations, whose language came to be adopted as the international language would derive material and also spiritual advantage from this linguistic expansion is not groundless. At least it is not within the framework of national thinking as it prevails today, whereby one nation's gain is not only not everyone's gain but indeed somebody's loss. While theoretically we may maintain that this state of mind is illogical and unethical and inimical to the common interest, we must admit that it is firmly imbedded in the mind of civilized man. What is even more discouraging, educated and presumably enlightened persons of responsible standing condone and encourage this attitude, as exemplified by the reaction of some scholars and national leaders to international languages. Obviously a thorough re-evaluation of values, to borrow a phrase of Nietzsche, lies many generations ahead of us if the gods grant our civilization to see the light at all. Some evils may seem ineradicable. But recognition and denunciation of their true character is a necessary, if thankless, task. Otherwise someone may produce phrases ostensibly critical:

“... no living language can become today the vehicle of intercourse for the whole

See also Leskien, August, *Zur Kritik der künstlichen Weltsprachen* (Strassburg, 1907), p. 37. Non-philologists retaliate by proposing the other extreme: “... the prevailing notion of language as something miraculous, untouchable, is fostered in a great measure, if not chiefly, by professional philologists. It follows that tradition and training unfit them for being the architects of the M[odel] L[anguage] . . .” Talmey, Max, “Notes on a Model Language,” *The Scientific Monthly*, XXVIII (1929), p. 331.

²¹ See: Dauzat, Albert, *L'Europe linguistique* (Paris, 1940); Woolner, A. C., *Languages in History and Politics* (Oxford, 1938); Meillet, A. and Tesnière, L., *Les langues dans l'Europe nouvelle* (2nd ed., Paris, 1928); Dominian, L., *Frontiers of Language and Nationality in Europe* (New York, 1917).

civilized world, and it is absurd to look for such a thing. . . . [It] would give the favored people such an enormous advantage in the control of the political world and such immense preference in the world's market that no nation would consent to it before its downfall."²²

This may be a true enough appraisal of facts. But that his words are not honestly critical is shown in that the same author elsewhere disparages claims for English as an international language, not on practical but on patriotic grounds, championing German instead. (That the concepts of "race" and "Anglo-Saxon" and "instinct" should be admitted in the discussion does not enhance its integrity.)

" . . . der angelsächsische Instinkt verlangt, dass es die englische Sprache sein soll, die sich den Weltkreis erobert. . . . Andere Nationalsprachen . . . mögen zunächst noch in Frieden bestehen, aber andere Weltsprachen dürfen nicht geduldet werden,"²³ and " . . . der Traum von der englischen Weltsprache [wird] schnell dahingehen; die Sprachhoffnungen für das Deutsche aber werden sich, wenn nicht alles trügt, aufs herrlichste erfüllen. Die deutsche Sprache kann und will da nirgends die englische Landessprache verdrängen. . . . "²⁴

After a violent attack, an appeasing gesture. It need hardly be mentioned that, on the other hand, in the days of Great Britain's greatest imperialistic expansion, the intrinsic virtues of the Anglo-Saxon tongue (for Anglo-Saxon read English) were extolled, along with some claims of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority. World domination was claimed, by some British subjects, for both race and language. I shall not attempt here to prove or disprove the basic merits of English, but the consensus of linguists in general appears to be that among Indo-European languages English has, in syntax, grammar and vocabulary, though not in orthography,²⁵ a great many attractive progressive qualities.²⁶ Naturally, this has nothing to do with the Anglo-Saxon race, whatever that is. But, it is asserted, the form of a language will in any event not be the criterion on the basis of which it will be or should be accepted universally, excepting perhaps orthography, where tradition is psychologically not so deeply anchored. The "illusion of linguistic perfection"²⁷ is, if not damaging, in no wise furthering the cause, especially if we

²² Münsterberg, Hugo, *American Problems* (New York, 1910), p. 214.

²³ Münsterberg, Hugo, "Sprachhoffnungen in der Neuen Welt," *Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik*, VI (April, 1907), p. 21.

²⁴ *Loc. cit.*, XIII (April, 1907), p. 56.

²⁵ Attempts at simplifying English spelling were criticized on linguistic practical grounds in plausible enough terms (Münsterberg, Hugo, *American Problems*, p. 195 ff.) but also were attacked and "exposed" as "*sprachlicher Imperialismus*" (Münsterberg, Hugo, "Sprachhoffnungen . . ." VI (April, 1907), p. 23).

²⁶ For a dissenting opinion see E. Sapir in: Shenton, H. N., Sapir, E., and Jespersen, O., *International Communication* (London, 1931), p. 79.

²⁷ Pei, Mario A., "A Universal Language Can Be Achieved," *Town and Country*, September, 1944, p. 130.

keep in mind, as we ought to, "... that the interlanguage of the future is for future, not for present generations, and that it does not have to be made 'easy' or 'logical' for anybody in particular,²⁸ provided it is imparted in the right way and at the right age."²⁹

It lies in the nature of the problem that the requirement for a *constructed* language is that it should be as nearly perfect as possible,³⁰ whereas an *existing* language must be accepted as it is, with perhaps no more than slight revisions in spelling and vocabulary. The latter applies to Basic English. As to perfection, who is to decide at what point a constructed language has reached that stage? Only its successful spread could confirm it. For, if any one authority were to constitute himself this infallible arbiter, his judgement would surely be challenged, and not necessarily out of mere spite and jealousy. I do not know how successful an Academy, that decides on usage and changes and improvements, could be in the long run. But if it had to deal with an artificial language, it would in any event labor under the lack of a linguistic hinterland.³¹ This is at least one danger to which a national language is less exposed.

Another frequently voiced objection against a constructed language is that, by definition, it will be poor, at least in vocabulary. That is also true of Basic English, but at least it has, should the speaker find it necessary or desirable, the vast reservoir of Standard English to draw from. It is true that, if "to borrow" is "to get credit" in Basic English, "not to get credit" is not by any means always the equivalent of "not to borrow"; that *schön*, *unschön*, *hässlich* are not two but three degrees of a quality, *unschön* not at all being identical with *hässlich*.³² However, such objections are indeed of a minor nature, and it may be presumed that any *used* language will develop a sufficient flexibility.

We shall find ourselves in good company whether we approve or disap-

²⁸ Educationists have measured the "Progress in Learning an Auxiliary Language" (Thorndike, E. L., and Kennon, Laura H. V., Institute of Educational Research, Division of Psychology, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1927). "No attempt was made in the initial stages of this testing to include tests intended to measure the ability to write or speak Esperanto" (p. 7), which is surely most unfortunate; but, it is said, "so far, results of measurements show that college students make the most progress in learning Esperanto, adults next, and then younger children" (p. 5). This is not startling so far, but I have been unable to find a continuation of the tests with more illuminating results.

²⁹ Pei, Mario A., "A Universal Language . . ." p. 130.

³⁰ See Meillet, Antoine, in his review of Gautherot, G., *La question de la langue auxiliaire internationale* (Paris, 1910), in *Revue Critique*, 11 mars 1911, p. 185: "Je crois à la possibilité et à l'utilité d'une langue artificielle internationale; mais je crois aussi que, avant d'arrêter cette langue, il faut l'examiner de près et la porter à un point de perfection tel qu'il n'y ait plus à la corriger d'une manière essentielle quand elle sera dans l'usage courant."

³¹ See Brugmann, Karl, *Zur Kritik der künstlichen Weltsprachen* (Strassburg, 1907), p. 25.

³² See Gomperz, Theodor, "Zur Frage der internationalen Hilfssprache," *Deutsche Revue*, XXXII (December, 1907), p. 294 ff.

prove of a constructed international language. Among its advocates were Schuchardt,³³ Jespersen, Max Müller, Wilhelm Ostwald, Sapir; among its adversaries Brugmann, Leskien, Diels, Gustav Meyer, Münsterberg. However, it is remarkable, and I wish to emphasize this again, that all disproving scholars did recognize the desirability of an international tongue. They did not agree in their reasons for rejecting artificial languages, nor on methods for the spread of a national language, nor were their motives always of unquestionable integrity. Furthermore, on the whole, whether they liked it or not, they conceded that the most likely international language was going to be that national tongue whose influence would extend over wide areas of the globe.

*"Man kann sich danach die zukünftige Entwicklung der Sprachenwelt so vorstellen, dass die grossen Weltsprachen den Umfang des ihnen botmässigen Gebietes immer mehr erweitern, so dass die Zahl der am Kampfe um die Hegemonie beteiligten immer mehr eingeschränkt wird. Das wird natürlich mit der politischen Gestaltung der Erdoberfläche aufs engste zusammenhängen."*³⁴ *"... aber sie [the simplification of language] kann nach meiner Meinung nur in der Weise erfolgen, dass die grossen Kulturmittelpunkte immer weitere Kreise um sich ziehen, um sich vielleicht schliesslich in einen einzigen zu vereinigen."*³⁵ *"Würde statt des jetzigen politischen Systems, das auf dem Gleichgewicht aller Kulturnationen mit starker Betonung der nationalen Verschiedenheit beruht, ein internationaler kosmopolitischer Völkertrust sich ausbilden, so würde sich voraussichtlich dieser monistische Trieb auch in der Sprachentwicklung betätigen."*³⁶ *"Mit der Einheit des Imperiums ist auch die einheitliche Weltsprache gegeben. Vae victis."*³⁷ *"Das natürlichste Heilmittel wäre, dass eine der beteiligten Sprachen allmählich immer weitere Kreise um sich zöge, sämtliche Konkurrentinnen nach und nach in die Ecke drängte und schliesslich alle völlig zertrete."*³⁸

That these authors felt compelled to deal with the problem in terms of "battle," "hegemony," "Imperium," "crushing," evokes an uncomfortable realization of conquest by force, and in this sense a fearful *Vae victis* is not unjustified. It is not unjustified at least as long as victory and defeat will be the two foci into either of which any nation is drawn as a matter of gravitation. It follows that, if we attempt to establish linguistic unity in the world by imposing it forcefully, we are employing the very method whose eradication from the face of the earth is supposed to be the result of our endeavors.

No decision can possibly be reached as long as within the minds of the

³³ See particularly Schuchardt, Hugo, "Bericht über die auf Schaffung einer künstlichen Hilfssprache gerichtete Bewegung," *Almanach der Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften*, LIV (1904), pp. 279-296, a report solicited by the Vienna Academy.

³⁴ Meyer, Gustav, *Essays . . .*, II, p. 40.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁶ Diels, Hermann, *Internationale Aufgaben*, p. 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³⁸ Brugmann, Karl, *Zur Kritik . . .*, pp. 6-7.

protagonists, be they scholars or diplomats, the national attitude prevails. It has been suggested by Pei that the nations of the world constitute a linguistic committee and entrust to it the task of selecting, from among spoken languages, one that is to become, by international law, the international language in which the coming generations will be raised.³⁹ Pei makes the realization of this plan dependent on the willingness of the world's governments to act within their countries laws in conformity with these international agreements. Similarly, Guérard bases the spread of the future international language on acceptance of a plan by an international body.⁴⁰ But both authors, it seems to me, fail to warn the reader that it is this very acceptance by the international body that renders the entire plan utopian now. The fulfillment of this one basic condition lies far beyond our reach, and this is not the fault of the world's diplomats alone. While not all governments nowadays are of such a nature as to express by their actions the will of the people, whether they call themselves democratic or not, it may safely be said that, in the long run, a people has the government it deserves either by assertive action or by default (although both conditions may for certain periods be withdrawn from the people's sphere of action). Considering, therefore, that, as Professors Pei and Guérard well know, not all governments (how many, really?) would enact such linguistic legislation in the foreseeable future, the corollary conclusion is that the peoples of the world as a whole are not willing to take such a drastic step. It might not be too difficult to select from each nation a man so minded as to reach an understanding with his fellow conferees. But one might be hard put to select one *now* who is at the same time so influential at home and so much a *propheta in patria* as to make palatable to his government and his compatriots a possible international decision which spells "defeat" to all good "patriots."

Even an attempt at uniting two great languages, French and English,⁴¹ which were to be, side by side and not in a bastardized mixture, international vehicles of communication, as proposed by Paul Chappellier,⁴² was branded by German scholars as a basically imperialistic western plot.⁴³ It did not help matters that in the preface Albert Dauzat welcomed Chap-

³⁹ Pei, Mario A., "A Universal Language . . . , *passim*."

⁴⁰ Guérard, Albert L., *A Short History* . . . , p. 194.

⁴¹ A first trial, by Hoinix, P., *Anglo-Franca, an Nouveau Plan for the Facilitation of International Communication* (London, 1889), called by the author "*un compromis-langue english-français*" had little to recommend itself and probably repelled speakers of English and French alike. Behind the pseudonym Hoinix hides J. G. Henderson. This incredible Mr. Henderson gave the world two other international languages, *Lingua* and *Latinesce*, equally and happily forgotten.

⁴² Chappellier, Paul, *L'Esperanto et le système bilingue. La langue internationale réalisée par l'alliance du Français et de l'Anglais* (Paris, 1911).

⁴³ See Diels, Hermann, *Internationale Aufgaben* . . . , pp. 35-36.

pellier's proposal on the grounds that any other international language would endanger the influential position of "*notre chère et belle langue française*." This expresses an attitude which would, to some persons at least, no doubt seem praiseworthy, but which, I daresay, is not conducive to producing the harmony among peoples which should further the establishment of international languages. And who could blame several hundred millions of people for regarding Mr. Churchill's endorsement of Basic English with misgivings and apprehensions?

Nearly all propagators of international languages have insisted, in what has become the traditional timorous fashion among them, that their new language would not, and was by no means intended to, infringe upon or supercede the various national tongues. Hence they cautiously prefer to speak of an *auxiliary* international language. Particularly the adherents of constructed languages have, in fact, contrived to make a virtue of their policy of noninterference. The following words are quoted from the most enthusiastic, most persistent, most influential member of the movement:

*"Un tel choix [that of a national tongue as international language] se heurterait non seulement à l'amour-propre légitime des diverses nations, mais encore à leurs intérêts politiques et économiques, car il conférerait à la nation favorisée un avantage énorme sur les rivales dans les relations commerciales et même scientifiques. La langue d'un peuple est le véhicule de ses idées, de son influence, de ses produits et même de ses modes; elle est aussi l'incarnation de son esprit, le symbole de son unité nationale, de son indépendance et de sa suprématie."*⁴⁴ [Words in Roman type emphasized by me.]

It all sounds as if it came from the pen of Hugo Münsterberg,⁴⁵ but then Professor Münsterberg did not pose as an apostle of internationalism. If it is not the task of an international language to prevent these purely emotional, chauvinistic, anti-international notions from being nourished in people's minds, then what is its task? Yet here we see a man of Couturat's position extoll these separatist tendencies, this megalomaniac aspect of doubtful patriotism, and present exactly the ills a sane world can and must do without, as virtues whose perpetuation should be safeguarded.

But, Couturat and others would argue, we wish to be realistic and our constructed language aims merely to help man in *practical* affairs. In adhering to this self-imposed restriction, literary—that is, "impractical" efforts in the international language are automatically banned, and although Zamenhof and others wrote and recited Esperanto poetry (the British anthem also has been translated!), the Idists and Jespersen took pains to impress the world with the fact that their new languages were only auxiliaries for practical international intercourse and were not destined to supercede national languages. These practical aims lie mainly in the realm

⁴⁴ Couturat, Louis, *Pour la langue internationale*. Coulommiers, 1901, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁵ See pp. 55-56 above.

of communication among learned persons and of occasionally gathered international congresses and meetings,⁴⁶ of commerce, and of tourism. "*La langue internationale devra servir: 1° aux savants de tout ordre, . . . [à] tous les hommes d'étude; 2° aux industriels et aux commerçants; 3° aux voyageurs et aux touristes.*"⁴⁷ Let us examine the alleged realism of these projected fields more closely.

First—concerning international congresses of learned men and diplomats and deputies of various organizations—the idea that the use of an international language will absolutely relieve the participants involved from learning one another's native tongues is fallacious. Or can it be said that science and all international intercourse will, as it were, be born together with the international language, cancelling all that went before? Does anyone suggest that all publications of the past—scientific, diplomatic, philosophical—that all archives and private documents be translated into the new international language for the convenience of those "intellectuals" who wish to remain ignorant of any other foreign tongue?

Second, commerce has done well, exceedingly well on an international scale so far. Indeed in its most efficient form, in trusts and cartels, it covers the whole world with a network of intricate interrelations. However, whether this system has proven beneficial to the interests of humanity is still a doubtful matter in the mind of nearly everyone. Also, this expansion was accomplished without the aid of an international language, and on the whole it seems that a firm engaged in international dealings (and there are relatively very few such) finds no difficulties in attending to its correspondence and personal contacts by means of bilingual secretaries and interpreters. However, say the interlinguists, much expense of human power and money could be saved by employing an international language.⁴⁸ That would be a most cogent argument, indeed, if the human power thus removed from unproductive toil could be or would be employed productively. In the existing circumstances, and surely for quite a span of time to come, unemployed workers are, except in wartime, not put to productive work automatically and with certainty. We are still laboring under the pangs of the Industrial Revolution, and the machine has not yet been entirely subdued. In other words, the use of an international language in commerce and industry might save money, but it would not enhance productivity unless it were coupled with, or preceded by, some other social adjustments.

Third, as for tourism, the less said the better. Even today, a man who

⁴⁶ The number of the last has been increasing steadily. See Shenton, Herbert N., *Cosmopolitan Conversation* (New York, 1933), containing abundant statistical material.

⁴⁷ Couturat, Louis, *Pour la langue internationale*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ See Clark, Walter J., *International Language, Past, Present, Future* (London, 1907), pp. 4, 42, 44, 73.

knows English can without any difficulty travel around the world, and if he really has to learn English in order to do so, he will derive from his efforts the not inconsiderable advantage of being able to read Shakespeare. As for the endlessly advertised prize that, if there were an international language, a traveler could talk to any grocer or peasant or bootblack or vendor in the bazaar without difficulty and—how wonderful!—haggle about prices, prospective tourists may rest assured that they can obtain anything the strange world beyond one's boundaries is *willing* to sell, no more no less, the deal being closed in any odd language, with gestures if need be.⁴⁹ What Bréal calls "*un billet de circulation pour les hôtels*"⁵⁰ and the ability to bargain (with presumably congenitally slippery foreigners) are ridiculously meager and discouragingly undignified results of a linguistic revolution (and, be it added, of a modern language course at school!). The earnest tourist who really wants to become acquainted with a foreign country will have to learn its language so that he may read its books and papers, especially old books and old papers which, it may be presumed, will not all be translated into the international language.

By timidly restricting itself to "practical," "realistic" goals, the international language movement has deprived itself of, rather than enriched itself with, good reasons for its realization.

Advocates of the immediate unconditional adoption of an international language have well been aware of the fact that only very few persons in each nation would master the language or take the trouble of finding out how it works, unless necessity pressed them. It is curious to note in this connection that one of the most inveterate and, alas, most eminent enemies of the international language scheme, Karl Brugmann, concurs with those of its promoters who wish to restrict it to a secondary role as international linguistic hand-maiden.⁵¹ Although the name be Brugmann, this is not good company for an interlinguist to keep! Descartes, on the other hand, while admitting the possible necessity of restricting an international language to writing only, makes no virtue of respecting patriotism and sectionalism for the sake of appeasement:

⁴⁹ Apparently some English tourists do not even like to be addressed in a familiar tongue: "Any visitor to any foreign country will remember how persistently and shamelessly the local inhabitants, even the school children, force their crackpot English on the long-suffering tourist, especially the Teutons. Some of these pests are seeking money; most are seeking what money will not always buy—an English lesson." (Roust, H. V., *Basic English and the Problem of a World Language*, London, 1941, p. 8.) I do not know who the "Teutons" are, and grammatically it does not become quite clear whether they are the nasty foreigners or the long-suffering English travelers. Nor do I see why seeking an English lesson, not money, should be so reprehensible. It all becomes even more confusing if one realizes that the author advocates, in this same pamphlet, *Basic English as a world language*!

⁵⁰ Bréal, Michel, *Revue de Paris*, 1^{er} septembre 1901, pp. 222.

⁵¹ See Brugmann, Karl, *Zur Kritik . . .*, p. 28.

"... s'il [the author of the international language] veut qu'on apprenne des mots primitifs, communs pour toutes les langues, il ne trouvera jamais personne qui veuille prendre cette peine; et il serait plus aisé de faire que tous les hommes s'accordassent à apprendre la Latine ou quelque autre de celles qui sont en usage, que non pas celle-ci, en laquelle il n'y a point encore de livres écrits, par le moyen desquels on se puisse exercer, ni d'hommes qui la sachent, avec qui l'on puisse acquérir l'usage de la parole. Toute l'utilité donc que je vois qui peut réussir de cette invention, c'est pour l'écriture. . . ."⁵²

It seems appropriate here to consider the technical obstacles to the spread of the international language—no matter of what type, provided the plan of campaign includes that it be learned like any foreign language—and to become consciously cognizant of the basic fact that in reading and writing, indeed even in speaking, a very large proportion of the population of the countries of the world, not necessarily illiterate in any degree, masters its own native language but imperfectly, colloquially and ungrammatically.⁵³ If such is the proficiency attained by a majority of speakers in their respective mother tongues, the propagators of the international language rightly did not expect their new language to reach any but the strata of higher intelligence. Particularly, it may be added, since there is now no reason to expect that, say, an English-speaking student would learn and retain the international language more willingly and efficiently than he now learns and retains French or German which he "takes" at school, unless the study of the international language becomes a virtue through necessity. In 1893 Gustave Meyer answered the question whether a world language was desirable and possible with a decided "yes."⁵⁴ But he also stated with refreshing bluntness that the great majority of the inhabitants of our globe has not the slightest interest in the creation of an international language.⁵⁵ In his opinion, the solution of the problem is bound up with the solution of the greater problem of the evolution of humanity along humane lines.⁵⁶ I do not know that Meyer's harsh judgement about the interest of the masses

⁵² Lettre à Mersenne, *loc. cit.*, p. 91.

⁵³ "How many of those who speak English can write it beyond the stage: 'Hello, Joe! How are you? I am just fine having a helluva lot of fun with the guys.' As regards speaking [an acquired language] it presupposes a very rare quality of hearing well and being able to imitate the sounds, and then reproduce them correctly, not only in brief yells of the aforementioned type, but in long and well-modulated sentences. This is difficult even for ninety-nine percent of those speaking the language as their mother tongue, and as regards a foreign language very few human beings become bilingual, trilingual and above that." (Nykl, A. R., "Remarks on Recent 'Linguistics,'" *The American Slavic and East European Review*, IV (1945), p. 196.) I can only corroborate Mr. Nykl's statement in every word from my personal wide experience acquired as a mail censor in the United States Army during several months in the late war.

⁵⁴ Meyer, Gustav, *Essays . . .*, II, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

in an international language can, after half a century, be so extensively revised as to warrant new international enterprises of the *same type* now. A *new* manner in which to facilitate the spread of an international language, whatever it be, is suggested by Pei,⁵⁷ whereby the international language should be imparted to children like a native tongue, and not taught like a foreign one, from kindergarten on. As for the older generation, it may do as it pleases and either learn or scorn the international language, its members "will be dead within a century anyway." But that scheme optimistically presupposes, of course, the good will of the world's governments.

A sociologist is of the opinion that

"an auxiliary language program must create a demand by revealing the need in terms of existing waste, embarrassments and inadequacies, together with possibilities of economy, achievement and satisfaction," and that "demand does not become effective unless the public knows what it needs in terms of what it may have."⁵⁸

I wonder whether that is not a great deal more true in concrete matters which improve the life of the individual materially (the "high standard of living" comes to mind here) than in matters of a spiritual nature without immediate tangible rewards for all. Have not Judaism and Christianity, and, for that matter, other religions, preached for many centuries to "love thy neighbor as thyself"? If these great social agencies which have certainly shown man "what he may have" did not succeed in producing brotherly love (although the fault lies, to some extent, with these agencies themselves), can a linguistic reform accomplish that? At any rate, for the time being and, most likely, for a while to come, the international language movement will not arouse the masses and "... its clientèle will be first of all the intellectual élite. . . ."⁵⁹ However, this intellectual élite, if it consist of men worthy to be so classified, is the group that has the least need of an international language. Not only do many of its members master already more than one national language, but by definition they should belong to a class of persons among whom the psychological damages caused by international unintelligibility tend to be comparatively small. They are among those whose critical powers are developed to a relatively high degree, preventing them from falling prey too easily to those rabble-rousing demagogues who want to make it appear more worthwhile to die than to live for one's country. (But there are many exceptions, and it has been the thankless task of this paper to bring some of them to light.)

By speaking of the factual realization of an international language, we have come to a vexed question which needs to be illuminated. Since an international language is allegedly somehow related to closer understanding

⁵⁷ Pei, Mario A., "A Universal Language . . .," p. 130. See p. 59 above.

⁵⁸ Shenton, H. N., *International Communication*, p. 57.

⁵⁹ Guérard, Albert L., *A Short History*, p. 204.

among the inhabitants of the world, it must be assumed that such an international language is either an instrument for bringing about such improvements or the result thereof. The apostles (the term is here used seriously for some, derisively for others) of the universal language movement in all its phases and forms insist, implicitly or explicitly, that once we all talk the same language, our life will not only become easier in practical respects but we shall also have made a great step towards that brotherhood of man which we all of course desire if we are in our right senses. It has been declared that many international misunderstandings which lead to resentment, hatred and, ultimately, armed conflict, could be eliminated if we could make ourselves understood by our neighbors, if we could talk to them, read their papers, listen to their radio, see their films and the like. To point out that there have been and are now raging conflicts and wars, very cruel wars, among speakers of the same language is as simple an answer as it is obvious. Arguing in this manner we are, perhaps, dealing with the question in too popular terms, but in such terms are couched the claims of the interlinguists which they advance to the so-called common man because only fairly tangible advantages will arouse his interest. Naturally, the prospective convert will soon find himself disappointed, simply because he has been led to expect too much. Oversimplification of the issues and over-advertising will, in such serious matters, not be so easily tolerated as in the case of toothpaste and automobiles. No doubt if we speak of international understanding as contained in language we are speaking of a semantic problem. But are our—certainly existing—international semantic problems of such a nature that the acoustic appearance of a common term will solve them? Among the most embattled terms of our day are "democracy," "communism" and "socialism." These words are internationally understood, and they present in all civilized languages approximately the same auditory, or at least visual, impression. It is hardly likely that even an artificial international language would choose other vocables in their stead. But does that imply that all those who recognize the word really mean the same thing by it?⁶⁰ What is then the advantage of the identity or near-identity of the sounds? If *Allemand*, *German*, *Deutscher*, *Tedesco* and others were all replaced, in the international language, by a quite neutral sounding new term—for example, *Bodo*—would that in any manner whatever change the individual's attitude toward the concept itself? Would not *Bodo* in fact be and "mean" the same thing as *Allemand*, *German*, *Deutscher*, *Tedesco*, and would it not arouse the identical emotions, favorable or unfavorable, in anyone who knows its "real" meaning? An international language of the type which, like any other foreign language, is acquired by learning vocables,

⁶⁰ Ogden, C. K., and Richards, I. A., would call these "symbolically blank but emotively active words." (*The Meaning of Meaning*, London, 1938, p. 125.)

is based on translation, conscious or unconscious. And in learning a translation, can the student be expected to refrain from perpetuating the semantic content of the original, can he be so inspired by a new set of sounds that he fills them with a new semantic content which presumably entails a "better," more humane, less prejudiced attitude toward his fellow men?⁶¹

Often interlinguists counter assertions, that an international language will not be used by the masses or not produce the desired results, by pointing out that one or several international languages do exist and that people of different native tongues do use them for oral or written communication. There have been congresses, it is said, at which one or the other international language has been employed by all participants to universal satisfaction. And, it is argued further, since these persons could satisfactorily use the language and enjoyed meeting one another, forgetting their latent national, racial, religious prejudices, everybody will be able to do likewise once an international language is known by all people.

It is true that the more successful international languages are, on the whole, more easily and quickly acquired than another *foreign* language, although even this has been contested, though unjustly, I think.⁶² But there is certainly a very strong objection to be marked against the claim that the atmosphere of understanding and friendship at gatherings of interlinguists is the *result* of the faculty of intercourse in the international language. This spirit is, on the contrary, the very *cause* of the gatherings of those persons of good will. They all learned the international language because they believed *beforehand* in international cooperation, because they had freed themselves already of at least some of the prejudices under which others still labored: *they had acquired an international language not in order to learn, but to practice brotherhood of man!* No doubt this new experience enhanced and confirmed their conviction so that the international language must of course be credited with a beneficial influence. But this undoubtedly great value of international intercourse extends today to far too few people. To enlarge the circle of the initiated, the aim of language planners has been to produce better—that is, easier—more logical languages. No doubt this endeavor is aimed in the right direction—if what is sought is an artificial language—and should induce more people to devote some efforts to their own betterment. But, by and large, is the *form* of the language the most important factor to provide this inducement? Is not the spirit of the student the basic condition for advancement? Is not the

⁶¹ "In all discussions we shall find that what is said is only in part determined by the things to which the speaker is referring. Often without a clear consciousness of the fact, people have preoccupations which determine their use of words. Unless we are aware of their purposes and interests at the moment, we shall not know what they are talking about and whether their referents are the same as ours or not." (Ogden and Richards, *Meaning* . . . , p. 126.)

⁶² Leskien, August, "Zur Frage . . .," pp. 394-395.

more basic necessity to prepare men for the acceptance of a common tongue rather than to create one that is as easy as possible and to ram it down their throats? We should think, therefore, that society needs to be prepared along other than linguistic lines for a world-nation and a world-language, that the individual needs to be educated to see the advantages as well as the dignity of his status as a world-citizen. Certain powers in the world at large produce far greater evils than linguistic misunderstanding ever will produce, and a mere linguistic reform cannot be expected to cope with these powers. There are social agencies that exist in flesh and blood, in gold and oil, in guns and airplanes; and they all furnish ceaselessly occasion after occasion that breeds hatred and war. How can a mere linguistic regularization undo so much damage?

But, one will say, is it more realistic to insist that the new international language, whatever it turn out to be, should usurp the field of national languages instead of existing peacefully side by side with them? It is and it is not. It is less realistic if we insist on trying to make the international language the cause rather than the result of human improvements, for then we simply deprive ourselves of so many prospective converts who will be deterred by what seems undue radicalism or impractical idealism. It is more realistic, however, if we want first of all to see humanity reach a stage in which it recognizes, and is mentally and physically ready for, political and economical internationalism, in which case an international language is merely one more *expression* of this awareness.⁶³ For we must keep in mind that language is primarily a social act and that it is conditioned by the state of society and *created by society*, that it is the *result* and not the *cause* of a state of mind.⁶⁴ The future international language will be as international and as brother-loving as future generations will be. If we insisted on creating for them such a language today, we should incorporate in it our own imperfections and transmit to them our state of mind which, we hope, will *not* be theirs.

⁶³ Such highly advanced countries as Great Britain and the United States have not seen fit, for example, to adopt the undoubtedly superior metric system, Great Britain not even in its monetary standard. Scientists in both countries, it is true, have long since measured in *cm* and *kg*, but for them it was necessary, not only desirable. They also have developed everywhere, equally through necessity, an international terminology and, in chemistry and mathematics above all, a sort of pasigraphic writing.

⁶⁴ I am excepting, of course, that temporary state of mind which literary works of art may create in a receptive person by means of a particularly inspiring, emotive language. "A poem . . . has no concern with limited and direct reference . . . Its function is to use an evocative term in connection with an evocative matter. What it does, or should do, is to induce a fitting attitude to experience." (Ogden and Richards, *Meaning* . . . , p. 158.) In the same category belong also the calculated effects of the language of advertising and propaganda, although temporary influence has, under favorable conditions, a good chance of creating a permanent attitude.

Let us therefore foster and nourish and spread the conviction of the possibility and the ultimate necessity of an international system of communication, but let us by all means refrain from setting our hearts on one and imposing it, or even trying to impose it, on our children: it will not serve them well.

Humanity has hardly produced a more viciously absurd adage than "My country, right or wrong." Largely because of it internationalism is still subservient to national supremacy, the United Nations are unable to infringe upon the national sovereignty of any country, the world-police, if formed, could not intervene against the major powers and the common man is still given to ideas of patriotism—and, for all we know, as of this date, as a matter of self-defense, he may be right.

In propagating an idea, nothing is gained by belittling the difficulties, and promises impossible of being kept are damaging to the cause and the integrity of its champions. Therein lies the danger, I think, for linguists and others who promise the world redress from many old evils by means of an international language.

"You scientific people, with your fancy of a terrible exactitude in language, of indestructible foundations built, . . . are marvellously without imagination." (H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*, I, p. 5)⁶⁸

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⁶⁸ Unfortunately, Mr. Wells' formal contributions to the international language controversy (*Saturday Review of Literature*, XXVI, 32 (August 7, 1943), pp. 4-6) lack the pungency of his aphorisms and are ill-informed.

Notes and News

Professor D. Lee Hamillon, of the University of Texas, has recently joined the editorial staff of the "Journal." He will be Assistant Managing Editor in charge of materials in Portuguese.

Pidgin English

"Pidgin" English has had a long history in Hawaii, and it forms today one of the Territory's major educational problems. Originating as a means of communication among peoples of various racial backgrounds as they were being imported into the Islands to work on plantations, this makeshift language utilizes only the important words. It is, in fact, a simplification of the quite complicated English language by Orientals and Europeans who, for business and social purposes, need to use it even though they remain baffled by its apparent difficulties.

The vocabulary is almost entirely drawn from the English language, supplemented by Hawaiian. Sentence structure is very primitive, articles are omitted and verbs are not inflected. In all this it resembles the Japanese language. Children of all backgrounds easily have picked up those errors they hear all around them; to older people of non-English origin pidgin English seems a relatively simple solution to their language problem.

To complicate further its understanding, the pronunciation of pidgin English differs—each nationality has its own peculiar way of pronouncing the jargon of words which have proved absolutely essential to convey meaning in a form as simple as possible. Both Hawaiians and Japanese give the long *e* sound to *i*'s; Japanese give the *r* sound to *l*; Portuguese the *ee* sound to short *i* and the *d* sound to *th*. To those not initiated into its mysteries, the voice inflection, in which pronouns are wrongly stressed, gives the language an amazing and frequently humorous sound.

Pidgin English makes practically no use of auxiliary verbs. This eliminates fine shades of difference in meaning. It frequently is a mystery just what is meant. "I find for him" can mean "I am looking for him," "I looked for him," "I shall look for him" or "Shall I look for him?" Questions are indicated only by a rising inflection. Here again a great deal of the exact shade of meaning depends upon the native tongue of the speaker as well as upon his age and experience.

Since nothing but direct-action words are included in pidgin English, necessarily the vocabulary remains inadequate. To express an abstract thought is practically an impossibility. There is no flesh and blood—nothing but muscle and bone in this language. The tragedy in Hawaii is that so many people use it exclusively for all conversation that must be carried on in English. Beyond that they revert to their native tongue.

A prominent American educator from the Mid-West, upon arriving in the Islands, made the blunt and significant statement in a radio broadcast that pidgin English is Hawaii's major educational problem. This statement drew fire in the "letter to the editor" column of one of the daily newspapers. Said the critic:

"I agree wholeheartedly with the radio remark. Pidgin English is bad and should be eliminated even though we don't always appreciate hearing such remarks from *malihinis* (new-comers). But there are definitely two sides to the Island language problem. What about these *malihinis* who fail to learn correct pronunciations or even the words of commonplace Hawaiian, a beautiful language that has an equal right to be learned and pronounced correctly?"

There has been much truth in that letter writer's criticism. The Hawaiian language is beautiful and melodious. People who come to the Islands, especially those who remain for any length of time, should respect and use it correctly. Definitely there exist two sides to the language problem in Hawaii.

The prevalence of pidgin English has seriously delayed the eventual mastery of correct language structure and idiom. Yet, generally and broadly speaking, the public schools in Hawaii in teaching English usage in the classroom have been doing a much more effective job than the public schools on the Mainland. In Hawaii, as it should be, study of literature is definitely secondary to drill in language usage. It is the candid observation of this writer that American teachers too frequently find it easier and more convenient to discuss literature values than to drill on correct forms.

Perhaps the chief weakness in the teaching of English in Hawaii has been insufficient drill on oral usage, and this defect is being corrected as rapidly as qualified instructors can be secured. Most certainly intelligent and regular practice in public speaking in the classroom is a step in the right direction toward eliminating what is known as pidgin English.

However, the colloquial language so commonly used here in Hawaii is not much worse than "Brooklynese" which in recent years has been popularized by certain individuals who draw big salaries as radio network comedians.

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Contributors of articles, reviews, minutes of meetings and the like should bear in mind that the physical condition of contributions sometimes determines the chronology of publication. All contributions should be typed and double-spaced, with the exception of long footnotes. Standard-sized white paper should be used, and only an original copy is acceptable. Unacceptable contributions accompanied by unattached postage will be returned. Prompt acknowledgment of receipt is best assured by the inclosure of a self-addressed post card.

"Spoken Portuguese . . . "*"

Surely all teachers of modern languages are familiar with the booklets of short conversations devised by Professor Kany both for the classroom and for people who want to acquire by themselves some practical command of a language before they come to grips with it in the foreign country. Much of *Spoken Portuguese* is based on the three booklets previously issued by Professor Kany with another collaborator, but the present volume includes an introduction on pronunciation and an appendix on grammar.

The attitude I have heard most frequently expressed toward the booklets in Spanish, French and Portuguese is one of wonderment that, while they seem so "promising," so "practical" and easy, they turn out to be so difficult and relatively unsatisfactory in the classroom. Perhaps some of the disappointment may be attributed to lack of planning, and it may have been the authors' awareness of this that led them to outline in the preface detailed schemes for use of the book in the classroom. Still more of the difficulty lies in two related facts: while the usefulness of the conversations clearly is dependent on the more or less perfect memorization of them, the difficulty of memorizing them may be out of proportion to their value because of their lack of continuity; and usually they are still harder to memorize because they are introduced when each of them presents to the student a mass of unknown vocabulary.

* Kany, Charles E. and Pinheiro, João B., *Spoken Portuguese for Students and Travelers to Brazil*. D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1947, pp. xiv+187. Price, \$1.36.

It seems wise to use such conversations not so much for the learning of vocabulary as for the acquisition of fluency. That means they should be postponed until the students know a considerable percentage of the vocabulary involved—that is, rather beyond the point contemplated by the authors. For it is very questionable whether this book would be a satisfactory “*basic text not only for beginners with no knowledge of Portuguese*, but also for those who already possess a foundation” [italics mine] (p. iii).

The main objection to this book—for I waive in this review the valid and well-known objections to superficial “practicalness” as a criterion of elementary materials—has to do with its basic conception. Now what makes such a text attractive to many, and particularly to the layman, is the spontaneous fluency and the naturalness we associate with the concept of conversation. We would all like our students eventually to attain a “naturalness” of expression in the foreign language. But naturalness implies a close, one might say even an inevitable, linking of the sentiment with the expression. Of course naturalness is usually found with rapid and easy response, but speed and ease of response are not necessarily indications of naturalness. A baby may be perfectly “natural” when he quickly replies *dada* to any question. An adult who did the same naturally would be naturally idiotic. In like manner a student who, after his first classroom experience with Portuguese, can say *bom dia* fluently, and even with considerable accuracy of pronunciation, cannot be said to have reached naturalness even in that response. Naturalness depends in a measure, among mature people, on the ability to choose between a number of possible responses, and it is very debatable whether that capacity is developed by the memorization of a dialogue.

We are deluded if our association of *naturalness* with *conversation* leads us to use conversation manuals in the classroom merely because they contain conversations which, in certain unstated but presumably very specific circumstances, might be natural. In reality nothing could be more extreme, and often ludicrous, than the contrast between the external meaning of one of these conversations and the awkward, groping, strangely unrelated attitude of beginning students repeating it. Quite simply we must divorce the idea of “naturalness” from the elementary study of a foreign language in the classroom. It is a mistake to think that such study can be either “natural” or easy.

But aside from the idea of “naturalness” it remains true that we want our students to move in a direction which, if continued, would lead among other things to spontaneous naturalness in the foreign language with the greatest economy of time and effort. So the question is whether the memorization of such dialogues is the shortest way to that goal. I think not and for reasons which might best be expressed perhaps in an example. This is the first conversation in the book:

“Good morning.”

“Good morning.”

“How are you?”

“Very well, thank you. And you?”

“So, so. Not very well.”

“I’m very sorry.”

“Thank you.”

“Good-bye. See you later.”

“Till tomorrow.”

Now let us use those expressions in a short and very old story:

A farmer working in his field hears somebody call out to him. He looks up, sees a man on a black horse and walks over to him.

“Good morning,” he says, “how are you?”

“Good morning,” replies the stranger, “very well, thank you. And you?”

“So, so, not very well. . . .”

“I’m very sorry,” interrupts the stranger. “Can you tell me which is the best way to Jonesboro from here?”

The farmer thinks a moment and then asks, "Do you know where Dr. Smith lives?"

"No," says the stranger.

"Then do you know the big white house where the Widow Campbell lives?"

"No."

The farmer turns around. As he walks away he calls out, "Good-bye, friend, see you later. You can never get to Jonesboro from here, for you don't know this country well enough to use any information."

It seems obvious that the student will find it much easier to learn the second passage, even to memorize it, than one of comparable length similar to the first. Furthermore the second passage offers much more opportunity for flexible drill, for conversation which is not mere repetition. The point is that continuity, narrative, sequence of thought, specificity of reference—whatever one may call such ingredients—are essentials of any classroom material. Conversation must be *about something*. Conversation in the classroom approaches naturalness as it is based on something which is not only immediate to the student but which *provides the linguistic elements needed for conversation about the subject it itself provides*. That kind of drill may be furnished at various levels, not by a set of conversations which have no frame of reference but by a narrative, by cultural materials concerning the country whose language is being studied and the like. Such conversations as those in *Spoken Portuguese* tend to become a collection of linguistic beads which are assembled in a box, not threaded on a string.

Another way of putting the above might be to say that *Spoken Portuguese* is in reality a vocabulary organized, not alphabetically but by topics (for example, Greetings, Family, Time, The Hotel, The Train Trip and so forth). As such it is of great value to anyone who wants to memorize basic words and phrases for an early trip to Brazil. The language is authentic and the situations are on the whole well chosen—that is, the traveler in Brazil is almost certain to find himself plunged into some of them.

Any serious adverse criticism of *Spoken Portuguese* must be directed at the conception of the book, not at its execution, which is generally excellent. One hesitates to criticize the section on pronunciation, which was of course prepared for possible use without a teacher. Even so it seems a little far-fetched to suggest the pronunciation of *nh* by the word *onion* (p. xii). The average layman would probably understand the simple statement, "In the group *nh* the *n* is rarely pronounced; the group merely nasalizes the preceding vowel and introduces before the following vowel the first sound of *yes* nasalized." On the Brazilian *r* the authors probably considered it would have involved too much detail to mention that it is often an aspirate articulation when final in a checked syllable or after a nasal, *l* or *s*. But it is inaccurate and does not gain simplicity to say the aspirate articulation of final or strong *r* is the same as that of French uvular *r* (even though that pronunciation of the strong *r* may be heard sometimes, though rarely), and it is certainly misleading to write that the uvular *r* is pronounced by "*vibrating the back of [the] tongue against the soft palate*" [italics mine] (p. xii). The introduction says nothing about liaison, which not even an elementary exposition of Brazilian pronunciation can afford to neglect.

The language used in the conversations is well chosen and rather colloquial. Since it is clearly intended to be colloquial Brazilian idiom, however, one wonders why the authors did not go further in the omission of object pronouns and in the substitution of phrases for object pronouns. In explanation it should be said that the actual usage of object pronouns in Brazilian speech is a thorny subject. And it may be that the question of *teaching* them should be considered as quite distinct from the question of Brazilian usage. Perhaps the best plan pedagogically is to teach literary usage first and then show what Brazilians do with object pronouns in conversation.

It is at least debatable whether the singular verb is acceptable in the phrase "*falta-lhes lógica e bom gosto*" (p. 92). It seems misleading to write without explanation that *estada* is "preferable to the common form *estadia*" [italics mine] (p. 104). And *qual* would very rarely be used adjectively as in "*Qual esquina?*" (p. 120).

There follow some of the few objections possible to the grammatical appendix, which is generally clear, terse and rather complete. It would have been well to point out that possession in the third persons, when specifically expressed, is consistently *dêle(s)* or *dela(s)* in conversation, *seu(s)* and *sua(s)* being reserved for the second persons (p. 150). The comments on object pronouns in Brazilian Portuguese, which are unusually complete considering their brevity, should have included emphasis on the Brazilian tendency to omit them (pp. 152-155). It is misleading to suggest "Good luck" as a translation, particularly as the first one, of the conventional "*Passar bem*" (p. 161). It is an unnecessary and inaccurate oversimplification to say, "In Brazil *ficar* (to remain) is frequent instead of *estar* in all of its uses . . ." (p. 162). Even an elementary treatment of the Portuguese verb system is incomplete without a word on the special meaning of the present perfect (pp. 163, 169). Expressions of weather should have been listed not only with *fazer*, but also with *estar*, which is commoner in Brazil (p. 165). The only meanings suggested for *-inho* are smallness, affection and pity, but one of the examples is *pertinho*, a good illustration of the frequent superlative force of the suffix. And the only illustration of the augmentative is "*caixão* large box," a word which the Brazilian is most likely to associate with *coffin* (p. 165). Surely the acute accent should have been omitted from the first plural of the *-ar* preterit (p. 167). It is hardly sufficient distinction between the simple pluperfect and the compound to say merely that the latter is more common (p. 167, p. 169).

The following list contains the misprints I noted: p. xiii, *a vox* for *a voz*; p. 18, n. 2, stewardress for stewardess; p. 58, *encomodando* for *incomodando*; p. 61, *tamburête* for *tamborete*; p. 64, *legumas* for *legumes*; p. 124, *a doutor* for *o doutor*; p. 138, *va ver* for *vai ver*.

One can disagree with the pedagogical principles on which *Spoken Portuguese* was made and still welcome it as a useful addition to the short list of Portuguese textbooks available to us. It is a well made manual and will probably be used by a large proportion of Portuguese students in this country.

D. LEE HAMILTON

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Can Esperanto Solve the Language Problem?

One of the most difficult questions which the United Nations must solve in order to function smoothly is the question of which languages it will recognize as official during its sessions. Almost from the beginning, when the official delegates convened at the Food Conference at Hot Springs, Virginia, in the Spring of 1943, there was a controversy over what languages should be recognized as official languages. With forty-four nations represented it was not surprising that nearly every national language was suggested.

The argument still rages on, with suggestions from all sides. Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt stated that she would sponsor the teaching of an "auxiliary language" without committing herself as to which one she favored. The former Prime Minister of England, Winston Churchill, was not so tactful and came out for the use of Basic English as the international auxiliary language. His suggestion was met with a storm of protest from nearly all but the English speaking lands. The Chinese could not see why Basic Chinese would not be even better since more persons speak Chinese than do English. The gist of the protests was that some "neutral" international language was needed.

Immediately the proponents of several "so called" universal languages offered their particular language as the one. These included a babel of tongues such as Volapuk, Esperanto, Ro, Ido, Idiom Neutral and Universala. But by far the strongest of the groups were the proponents of Esperanto, a fifty year old language invented by Dr. L. Zamenhof.

Esperantists claim that ten million people in over sixty countries already speak Esperanto as an auxiliary language. It has been used for years in the international correspondence of

hundreds of firms including General Motors, Eastman Kodak, Selfridge Department Stores and Stetson Hats.

In the field of statesmanship they point out that Brazil has made Esperanto its official diplomatic language and that one of the leading Esperantists is Premier Joseph Stalin of Russia. Esperanto, incidently, is the only other language besides his native Georgian and Russian which Stalin has ever learned.

One of the advantages claimed for Esperanto is its great simplicity. It has only sixteen rules of grammar, and there are no exceptions to the rules. The verb has only one conjugation and only twelve verb endings. There are no irregular verbs. It has a vocabulary of 800 words (Basic English has 1000), but with the use of affixes it is possible to build over 80,000 words. This makes Esperanto one of the most flexible languages yet devised.

Basic English and Basic Chinese have one great advantage over Esperanto—both languages have great numbers of people who already know the languages. Neither language, however, is easy to teach to those who are unfamiliar with it. For example, since the Chinese language does not have an *f*, the Chinese find it almost impossible to pronounce the *f* in English or in many other languages. Unlike English or Chinese, Esperanto does not have any sounds which are difficult to pronounce.

Miss Roan Orloff, leading Esperantist, has argued that Esperanto is easy because unlike most languages it did not go through many stages of evolution. It was invented in 1887 by Dr. L. Zamenhof of Warsaw.

Yet in spite of its simplicity opponents delight in pointing out that ten million adherents are not many for any movement as old as Esperanto. They also claim that Esperanto has become something of a cult and therefore would not appeal to the masses of men.

Whether or not any of these charges and counter charges are true, Esperanto seems to find supporters whenever the question of an international language arises. We can expect to see it in the "news" very much in the next few years.

In the present attempt to establish a United Nations Organization, Esperantists will continue to press for the adoption of Esperanto as the language auxiliary. One of the most important reports on the question was submitted by the Joint Commission of the Council of Education in World Citizenship and the London International Assembly in 1943. This report asked that all governments choose some auxiliary means of communication. It further stated that such an auxiliary language should be neutral—that is, it should not be based on any one of the existing national tongues. This auxiliary language, the report declared, should be taught to all school children in at least all European countries, including Germany.

The educators will probably continue to quarrel over this report and the language question for some time. It means that all of us must have at least a smattering of information concerning such languages as Basic English and Esperanto. Only then can we intelligently understand and eventually support one group or another.

HUGO R. PRUTER

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Correspondence

To the Editor:

In a letter (*MLJ*, XXXI, 2 (February, 1947), pp. 112-13) à propos of the analysis of French adjectives whereby the feminine is treated of basic, Professor Pei asks: "Now whose is the 'classical' discovery, Passy's or Bloomfield's? If the former's, why was it erroneously attributed to the latter? Or could it be that it served the purpose of the 'linguistic science' school to attribute it to a contemporary compeer until opposition began to develop, whereupon the blame is placed on Passy, who is dead and cannot defend himself?"

In the first place, Passy may be dead, but he certainly can defend himself, and did so clearly and emphatically with regard to this particular point. I quote from the introduction to *Dictionnaire phonétique de la langue française* (Michaelis, Heinrich and Passy, Paul; Hanover-Berlin, 1897, pp. x-xi): "Nous avons aussi introduit dans notre ouvrage quelques modifications d'arrangement qui, nous l'espérons, seront regardées comme *des améliorations* [italics mine]. Telles sont, l'adoption, comme point de départ, du féminin pour les adjectifs et du thème pour les verbes. . . . Ces simplifications sont de nature à rendre les rapports mutuels des mots plus clairs."

In the second place, just for the sake of accuracy, I should like to point out that there is no contradiction between what I have said about Bloomfield and what I said about Passy, with regard to this theory. In previous discussions of the theory, I gave references to Bloomfield's book *Language* as being the best-known and most accessible exposition, and referred to Bloomfield's *demonstration* as being "classical," without reference to the age of the theory. Then, when picayune fault-finding set in, and critics started to condemn *modern* linguistics as being heretical in daring to adopt such an iconoclastic approach to the relation of masculine and feminine genders, I immediately pointed out that the idea itself goes back at least as far as Passy. Maybe it goes even farther back; I neither know nor care. The exact inventor of the theory is, in any case, irrelevant.

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Reviews

BOND, OTTO F., *Première étape, Basic French Readings*. Books One to Five—Alternate in one volume. D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1947. Price, \$1.72.

This attractive text consists of the first five booklets (in the Alternate Series) of the well known Heath-Chicago French readers, which have been successful in their three-fold purpose: (1) to provide the beginning student with brief units of material that is interesting, mature in thought and graded in accordance with a scientific method of word-count; (2) to supply a basic speaking and reading vocabulary which frequency counts have shown to be fundamental to all general use of French; (3) to train students to read French as French, independently and understandingly, early in their language career.

The titles of the booklets suffice to show that the content caters to the interests of students. Book One is the thrilling adventure of Edmond Dantès' imprisonment and struggle for liberation. Book Two, *La barbe ou les cheveux*, is "a sort of barbershop chord in literature," according to the editors, J. Douglas Haygood and Otto F. Bond. Book Three, *Cosette et Marius*, edited and abridged by Professors Grigaut and Floyd, is an episode taken from Victor Hugo's famous novel. The fate of a prize tulip bulb when Louis XIV of France invaded Holland in 1672 is the background of *La tulipe noire*, edited by Livingstone de Lancey and Otto F. Bond. The latter is editor of Book Five, an adaptation of Henri Bernay's pseudo-scientific novel, *L'homme qui dort cent ans*, a projection of contemporary social and economic life into the world of the year 2025.

Première étape has numerous pedagogical merits. It provides an opportunity for the instructor to build a sound foundation of vocabulary and idioms—beginning with 216 basic words and 45 idioms. In order to procure a satisfactory growth in vocabulary increment, there is ample repetition of new forms. Following each selection are varied exercises which point out: (1) cognates, (2) derivatives from words already familiar, (3) classified lists, such as parts of the body, personal states and conditions, (4) opposites. At the end of *Cosette et Marius* are sixty questions which followers of the Oral Method will welcome but may find insufficient for oral needs.

The paper is good and the type is clear. The plan followed in editing is: (1) new words and expressions, except cognates, are explained in footnotes in heavy type; (2) specific words (those outside the basic vocabulary and yet needed for the story) are in small capitals; (3) derivatives and compounds of words already known or occurring for the first time, if not cognates, are given in parentheses.

In a word, *Première étape* fulfills the essential requirements as outlined by H. R. Huse, our leading investigator on reading, "The beginning language text . . . should present units of expressions . . . in the approximate order of their importance as measured by frequency of occurrence."

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PARGMENT, M. S., *Beginning College French*. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1947, pp. xv+505 + xxxiv. Price, \$2.50.

The increase in French enrollments in the years since hostilities ceased has brought forth several new texts for the introductory course in French. Professor Pargment's *Beginning College French* is one of the most recent ones.

This book is a thick volume of more than five hundred pages and is more pretentious and more comprehensive than the usual first-year text. This the author makes clear in his *Foreword* (pp. v-ix), where he also makes valuable suggestions for the most efficient use of the book. All teachers who choose this book should read this section carefully before starting to use the book in class.

Mr. Pargment's book differs in several ways from the usual French text for elementary work both in the organization and in the presentation of the material. Pronunciation, so the author tells us, can be taught by the use of phonetic symbols or by the imitation method according to the desires of the teacher, and accordingly two treatises on French pronunciation are given (pp. 402-424). The grammar is presented in seventy-six lessons (pp. 1-324); each lesson contains a brief but adequate presentation of the principles being considered with reference to a more detailed treatment in the *Reference Grammar* (pp. 425-476). In each lesson we have a reading passage, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, verb-drills and similar exercises, as well as pronunciation drills in many lessons. The well-planned exercises are of sufficient variety to insure the proper teaching and emphasis of the forms being introduced, but they are never monotonous or dull. Beginning with lesson fifteen the grammatical material in each lesson unit is presented in French; the reference grammar, by the way, is entirely in English. With the foregoing exception, French is used throughout the book in every way possible. Mr. Pargment points out that the grammar may be taught in either French or English, as the teacher prefers. It seems to me that time can be saved and a better job done if English is used in the average beginning class, but in a good class French can be used for that purpose to good advantage.

The lesson vocabulary for each unit is placed at the end of the lesson, and each word is given in phonetic transcription; the general vocabularies (English-French and French-English) do not have the phonetic transcriptions of the words listed. Lessons six through forty-five have special pronunciation drills at the beginning of each unit.

The reading passages in the lessons are usually rather short, and no attempt is made to make them into a connected story that runs throughout the book; they are, on the whole, interesting and sufficiently varied. Those of the first five lessons are reproduced in the unit in complete phonetic transcription.

The grammar and verb exercises are, as has been said, varied, interesting and carefully prepared. There is considerable wise repetition of difficult forms and verbs, a feature often lacking in elementary texts. The exercises may be used for either oral or written work, as the teacher desires. The vocabulary of the book is largely drawn from the *Tharp* list.

Supplementary reading passages are provided for those who desire to use them. There are thirty-nine selections (pp. 326-398) of varying length and content, each of which is accompanied by a questionnaire, comprehension exercises, and a vocabulary of the new words introduced in the passage; no phonetic transcription is given for the words in these vocabularies. Three short poems are also to be found in this section as well as seven songs—both words and music. Tables of the regular and principal irregular verbs are to be found near the end of the book (pp. 477-505), and the two vocabularies close the text.

This book, attractively printed, nicely illustrated and remarkably free from errors of typography, is a welcome addition to our lists of French texts. It should give excellent results to all teachers who choose it as their beginning book. Although designed for college classes, I am sure that it can be used equally well in secondary schools if a somewhat slower pace is followed than that usually set at the college level.

WM. MARION MILLER

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BIRKETT, G. A., *A Modern Russian Course*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1947, pp. 330. Price, \$2.50.

Like Bondar's *Simplified Russian Method* and a *New Russian Grammar* by Anna H. Semenovoff—standbys in Russian instruction for a long time—Birkett's *A Modern Russian Course* uses the deductive method which caused so much headache to the young learner of Latin and Greek. Instead of offering a connected text with sensible contents, all exercises are based on sentences "the character (of which)," so states the preface, "is necessarily influenced by the fact that they are grouped as illustrations of particular points of grammar." Coherent readings in this grammar amount to very little.

Grammar for grammar's sake is not enough for modern language teaching and can by no means be identified with a knowledge of a language. The author of *A Modern Russian Course* draws the attention of teachers especially to the treatment of the verb, in which new features have been adopted with a view "to simplifying the verb for elementary students." Will Russian authors whom the student wants to read later on "simplify" their tremendous number and diversity of verb forms? Reading must be learned by reading and not by memorizing rules of grammar.

Psychologically, the acquisition of a Russian vocabulary according to the construction method is a Herculean task because the learning process of single words burdens the memory and neglects the benefit of subconscious association. Although Birkett uses for his vocabulary words in common use, they will be hard to retain because of their irrelevant connection.

Phonetics cannot be over-emphasized in the teaching of Russian since some of the Russian sounds are so very different from English. Instead of employing phonetic symbols for the correct pronunciation, Birkett uses an English transcription which necessarily leads the student astray.

Although Russian may be learned from Birkett's *Modern Russian Course*—in spite of the method and technical flaws—this grammar is not quite suitable for our students. The time element forbids the use of such a lengthy grammar. In other language courses with which Russian has to compete, short grammars with direct method exercises are standard. On the other hand the translation method is too cumbersome and brings too little reward for the effort expended.

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DRIZARI, NELO, *Spoken and Written Albanian*. Hafner Publishing Company, New York, 1947, pp. xviii+188.

In preparing this practical grammar of the Albanian language, Mr. Drizari has performed well a much needed task. The book is based upon his long experience in teaching the language as a living tongue and is intended for those people who wish to acquire some fluency in the use of the modern language. At the same time it offers rich material for those who wish to have a basis for more scientific study of Albanian philology. It is the first serious study of its kind in English and should fill a real gap in grammars of this nature. We can only be grateful to the author for attempting it and to the publishers for bringing it out in such a clear and attractive form.

CLARENCE MANNING

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ADAMS, NICHOLSON B., *España, Introducción a su civilización*. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1947, pp. vi+369. Price, \$3.00.

Hispanophiles will indeed be grateful to Professor Adams for providing them with a medium through which they can initiate others into the culture which has made a very sig-

nificant contribution to many nations and yet has remained only imperfectly understood by too many students. He has provided them with a concise presentation of the principal facts of the history, literature, art and music of Spain.

However, the brevity of this work has not reduced it to a lifeless skeleton which merely outlines facts. Rather it is a work inspired over a long period. This enthusiasm is manifested spontaneously and is sufficiently contagious to be shared by the reader.

In the examination of the literary masterpieces, the reader has the pleasant illusion at times that the author is discovering them with him. Nevertheless, there are no lax standards present in the evaluation of the literary contribution of any writer. Defects are recognized in many writers as readily as their merits are lauded. Exception has not been made in the case of contemporary writers.

In the survey of art and music, not only is Spain's contribution to the world indicated, but her debt to other people is acknowledged frankly.

The presentation of the salient facts of Spanish history is accomplished very ably. An unbiased attitude is evident in tracing the cause and effect of policies pursued by those in charge of the government. This is exemplified in the discussion of the Spanish Inquisition. No attempt is made to disregard some of the disastrous results of the institution, but at the same time there is a fair examination of the conditions which caused the king to feel that an arrangement of this type was desirable. The decline of the nation as a world power is pictured very clearly. The information concerning the great expenses of the government during that period and the excessive taxes that resulted will be understood readily by the reader of the present day.

As other supporters of the democracies, the author holds no sympathy for the present form of the government in Spain. He expresses a reasonable reaction, shared doubtless by many, in his *Prefacio*: "*Resulta menos comprensible que las democracias, sobre todo Inglaterra y los Estados Unidos se hayan mostrado a veces casi amigos del dictador fascista español.*" However, it is only just to stress the fact that the full story of the events of the last decade remains yet to be told. At such a time when it will be revealed, it will doubtless be evident that necessary discretion was often employed, even with the hazard of appearing inconsistent at times.

VIRGIL A. WARREN

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ADAMS, NICHOLSON B., *España—Introducción a su civilización*. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1947, pp. vi+369. Price, \$3.00.

Cuando en 1943 se publicó el libro titulado *The Heritage of Spain*, del Professor Adams, yo pensé en la conveniencia de disponer de una traducción del mismo al español. Ciertamente en inglés tiene su contenido un campo de difusión más extenso, pero en lengua española se ajusta más a las características de un libro de texto para los alumnos que, precisamente por hallarse interesados en el estudio del idioma de Cervantes, siguen en nuestros Departamentos los cursos de civilización hispánica.

Por fortuna, algo mejor que una traducción—la "autotraducción"—se ha publicado recientemente. Aunque por lo general los autores capaces de escribir literariamente en dos lenguas no gustan de "autotraducirse," es sin duda esta labor de verter la propia producción al otro idioma una excelente manera de revisarla y de perfeccionar su texto al considerar la obra en su doble expresión. Llevado de su fervoroso sentimiento hispánico y de su amor a la enseñanza, el autor ha convertido *The Heritage of Spain* en este nuevo libro titulado *España. Introducción a su civilización*, que ahora puede—y debe—difundirse por todos los países de habla española para que en ellos se conozca la acertada interpretación de lo hispánico expuesta por un profesor norteamericano.

Me parece poco menos que imposible historiar en un libro de trescientas, de quinientas o de

mil páginas la marcha de la civilización de un pueblo tan antiguo y de tan intensa vida como el español. Por ello, cuando se intenta esta difícil empresa, ha de ser forzoso prescindir de muchos elementos y aspectos del desenvolvimiento hispánico. Precisamente por esto, uno de los méritos que yo encuentro en el libro de Adams es el de referirse, con la brevedad impuesta por el número de sus páginas, a todos los principales puntos que debe contener un estudio histórico de la civilización española, si bien otorgando preferencia—muy natural en nosotros, los profesores—a la literatura, que ha sido y será siempre exponente luminoso de la vida espiritual de los pueblos.

Me parece—tal vez por tratarse de estudios de mi predilección—que habría de dedicarse mayor atención a ciertos problemas y aspectos. Fué España el país europeo que primero tuvo instituciones democráticas, convivencia pacífica de razas y tolerancia religiosa—el absolutismo y la intolerancia vinieron después, bajo las dinastías extranjeras,—y por ello creo que los municipios, los fueros, las Cortes y en general muchas manifestaciones hispánicas del "self government" merecen capítulo especial para examinar las raíces y el desarrollo de tan importantes instituciones medievales, y que habría de profundizarse en el estudio de las relaciones tan estrechas, frecuentes y beneficiosas entre cristianos, musulmanes y judíos. También debería consagrarse singular atención a ciertas cuestiones polémicas, como la obra de civilización de España en Hispanoamérica—que no ha sido tan mala como la presentan los creadores y divulgadores de la "leyenda negra" hispanoamericana, no tan buena como aseguran los fanáticos del imperialismo español austro-borbónico, sino algo que unos y otros desconocen,—y las causas de la decadencia de España,—fenómeno que no es sólo "the hardening of the arteries" como lo rotula el distinguido hispanista J. B. Trend, sino un complicado proceso nacional—discutidas casi siempre al calor de pasiones sectarias. Pero estos reparos, expresión de mi punto de vista personal, son cosa mínima comparados con el valor de conjunto de una obra enteramente madura y escrita con brillantez.

No es el texto español una mera versión del texto inglés. Contiene el nuevo libro algunas adiciones, entre las que me han interesado especialmente unas bien orientadas referencias críticas acerca de escritores contemporáneos. Figuran en el capítulo XXVIII ("Eruditos, prosistas y poetas de hoy") quienes no son, naturalmente, los septuagenarios sobrevivientes de la ilustre "Generación del 98"—que en sus últimas obras dan muestras de una penosa decadencia senil—sino un grupo más moderno de literatos que hoy viven en España, Francia y varias naciones de América, muchos de los cuales aparecen incluidos en la que acertadamente llama Homero Serfs "Generación de 1936," si bien el distinguido profesor de Syracuse University comprende en ella también ciertos escritores que por su edad y producción literaria son mucho más antiguos.

Escribir la historia de la civilización de un pueblo distinto de aquel en que el autor ha nacido y se ha formado, es labor relativamente fácil para quien disponga de tiempo, de una buena biblioteca y de mediana habilidad literaria. Pero el resultado será "una" historia, como muchas que se producen hilvanando datos e ideas tomados apresuradamente de otros libros. Poco valor tendría obra semejante, porque el autor no ha podido penetrar en el sentido íntimo de aquel pueblo, en lo genuino y básico de la civilización que, sin estar debidamente preparado, se atreve a historiar.

No se aprecia falta de consistencia y de penetración, sino todo lo contrario, en la obra del Profesor Adams. Su sincera y profunda devoción hispánica, dilatando y afinando las posibilidades que un concienzudo estudio ofrece, le ha permitido llegar al fondo, al corazón y a la médula de lo que ha sido y es el pueblo español, para establecer un criterio de enjuiciamiento histórico, amistoso sin dejar de ser objetivo, que ha hecho de su libro lo mejor que podía ser: una verdadera y luminosa interpretación de *lo hispánico*, cuyo conocimiento habrá de ser muy útil a los alumnos interesados en estudiar la lengua y la civilización de España.

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BELL, AUBREY, F. G., *Cervantes*. The University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1947, pp. xvii+256. Price, \$3.00.

Mr. Bell excuses himself for adding a new item to the long list of books about Cervantes by saying "... it is probably the duty of every Spanish scholar to write a book on Cervantes as it is the duty of every Greek scholar to publish a translation of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, in the hope of drawing nearer, if only by a single line, to the ideal translation, the perfect picture."¹ This excuse is hardly needed. A good book, like a piece of art, is its own excuse for existing. Those who read Mr. Bell's book will not need to be convinced that it is a good one and that he has added considerably to our appreciation of the great Renaissance novelist.

Nearly all books that deal with the writings of Cervantes end by being a discussion of *El Quijote*. Although a large part of Mr. Bell's excellent book discusses the adventures of "The Knight of the Sad Countenance," we are conscious, even when as rarely happens there is no definite reference by volume and page, that the discussion is of the entire literary output of Cervantes. Even the most neglected of his writings are made to contribute something.

Mr. Bell is not interested in giving us new facts about Cervantes or dates of the composition of the individual literary efforts of the *manco*. He is rather, attempting to give us a new basis or several new bases for a new appreciation of the complete works of Cervantes. Internal evidence is given a place of honor throughout this study.

All of the eleven chapters are worthy of careful discussion, but we find especially interesting chapter six, *The Probing of Reality*; chapter nine, *The Birth of Humor*; chapter ten, *The Purpose of Don Quijote*; and chapter eleven, *The Gate of Freedom*.

In chapter six just mentioned, Mr. Bell, still referring often to the words of Cervantes, as well as to other philosophers, brings up the old but always interesting question: What is reality? Which is the real Dulcinea, the peasant girl or the imagined princess?

Humor, about which much has been written, comes under the analysis of Mr. Bell's thought. Perhaps the most interesting conclusion is that humor belongs to the people. Specialists, people of one-tracked minds, are serious, stern, dull. The ordinary individual with general, varied interests, is the depositor of humor.

The chapter on the purpose of *Don Quijote* will open up this question anew. Although Mr. Bell's conclusion as to what that purpose is may not be entirely new, we may be allowed to quote:

"However that may be, the main theme of *Don Quixote* was clearly the presumption of Don Quixote, the presumption of Sancho, the presumption of Cervantes, of Spain, of modern man, who, in aspiring to be his own Providence, finds himself no longer bound by gold chains about the feet of God but bound by red tape about the feet of man."²

Mr. Bell comes to the end of his book with a half-prophecy:

"Spain watches and waits for the hour of renewal, and it may well be that she will lead the way into the new Renaissance. The Spanish, with Cervantes at their head, have always withstood any narrowing of life, and Cervantes is still there, inviting us all into an ampler, more joyous way of living."³

If there is any chapter that could be sacrificed (and even as we mention this we are conscious of the fact that we are subjecting ourselves to well-deserved criticism), it is chapter eight, *The Religion of Humanity*. Our superficial, but repeated, reading of *El Quijote*, *Los extremos*, and *Las novelas ejemplares* have not roused in us any great interest in Cervantes' religion. Whether he was orthodox, a doubter or indifferent to religious dogma seems quite immaterial to the appreciation of his art. Many of us are not interested in whether Cervantes or Pereda (or anybody else, for that matter) gave Protestants a share in salvation.⁴

¹ P. xvii, lines 1-6.

² P. 221, lines 15-25.

³ P. 236, lines 19-23.

⁴ P. 178, lines 21-22.

It is well for any one attempting to discuss this new and fundamental book on Cervantes to remember that Mr. Bell is not attempting to do what was done by Professor Américo Castro in his *Pensamiento de Cervantes* or by the late Professor Rudolph Schevill in his biography prepared for the series, *Master Spirits of Literature*. We feel that we are not too bold when we say that Mr. Bell's book will remain with us as a classic. Many discussions of Cervantes or of his individual productions will be published to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of his birth. Most of these publications will be of transient value. We prophesy, however, that Mr. Bell's book will still be constantly consulted when another 100 years have rolled by.

Both the author and the publisher are to be congratulated on this contribution to Cervantine studies. No library or serious student of Spanish letters can afford to be without this volume.

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